

The Holy Priest

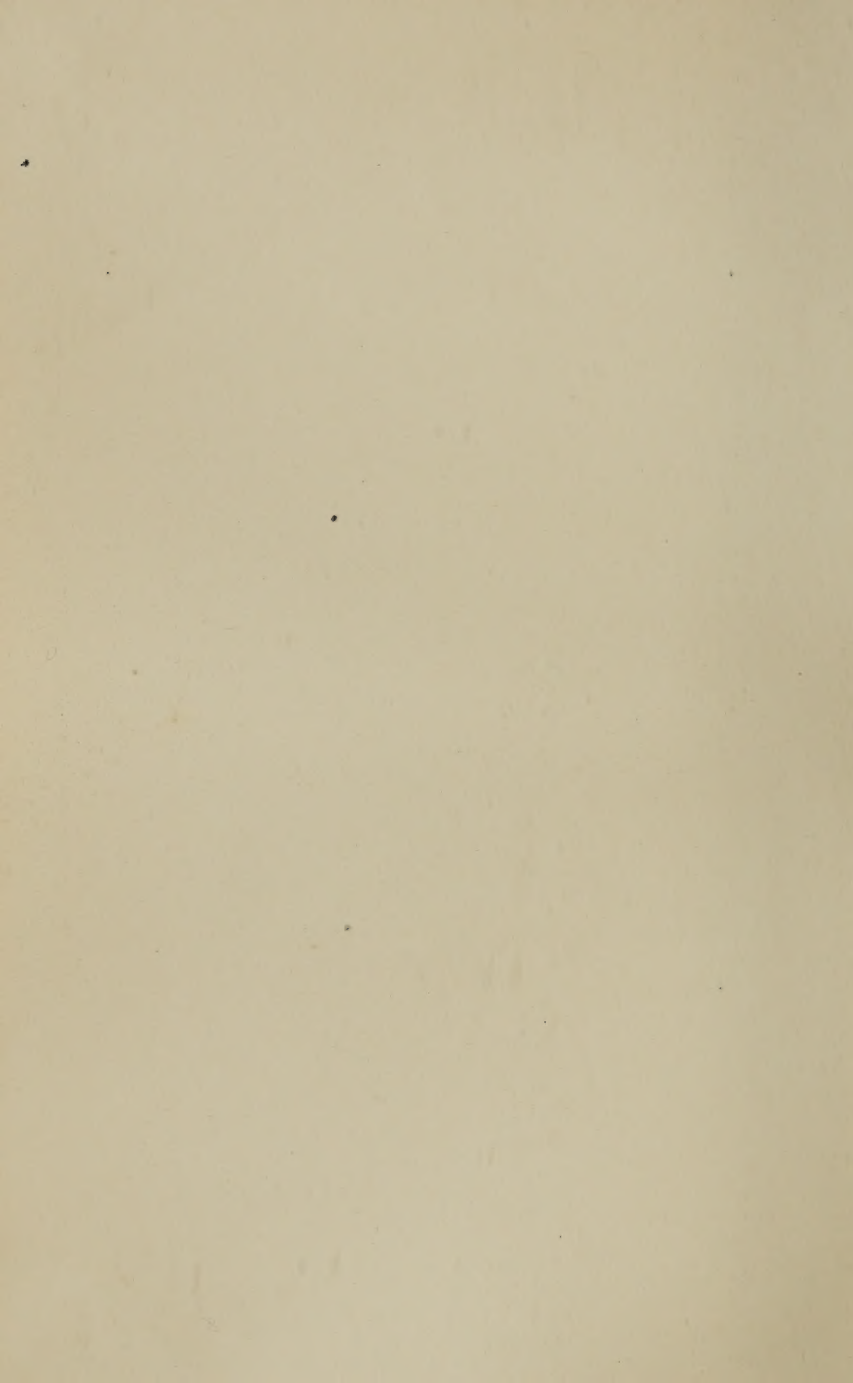
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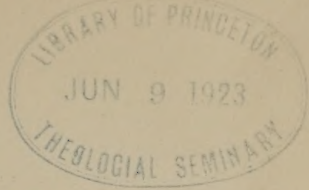
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The holy priest

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The Holy Priest

By the

Rt. Rev. Wm. E. McLaren, S.T.D., D.C.L.,

Bishop of Chicago

"It is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

—1. S. Peter i, 16.

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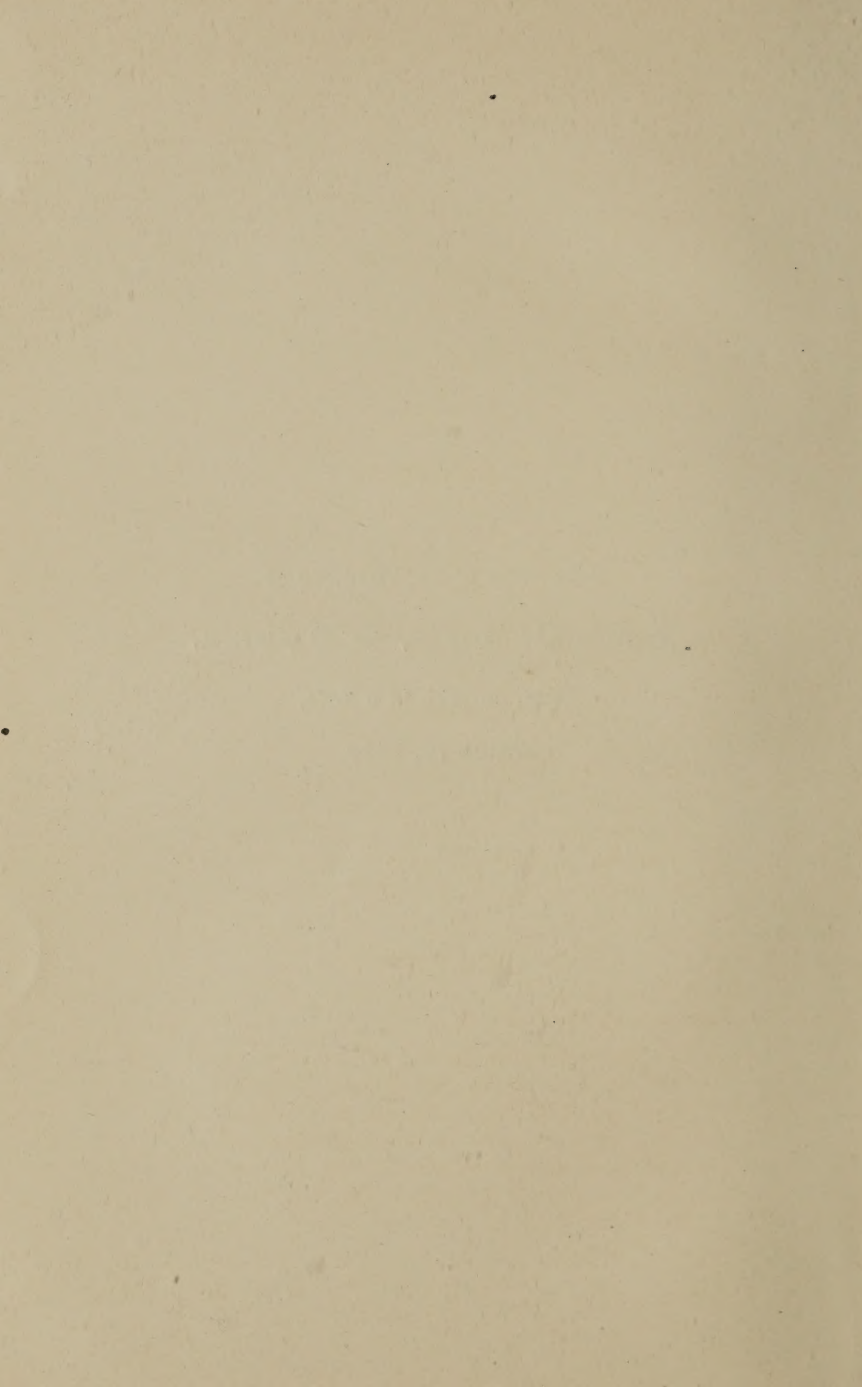
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Inscribed to the Memory of
James De Koven, D.D., Priest,
Who entered into Life,
March 19, 1879,



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Preface.

THIS is an attempt to portray the inner life of a holy priest. The sources from which its lights and shadows have been drawn are a personal acquaintance with some and the biographies of many who approximated the stature of Jesus Christ in their priesthood. In the progress of the years, a certain definite conception has gradually impressed itself upon the mind; and this it is which is here put into words, with the sole object that, so far as it is to the life, the portrait may win the writer and the reader to a nobler apprehension of the spiritual possibilities of the Christian priesthood.

The book is simply a record of impressions, and does not aspire to the dignity of a treatise on the nature and functions of the priesthood. It presents an ideal, but one so dim of outline that the writer dare not regard it as more than a suggestion of what some nobler hand may depict, some humbler mind describe, to the end that we may be awakened to see how empty and useless are church, dogma, sacrament, outward expansion, societies, and meetings, if by our fault these are not permitted to produce in us their normal and predestined fruit of personal holiness. God has taught us so much and we have learned so little of the supreme necessity of character conformed to the Christly example, that it does seem as if

this ought to be the problem of the hour rather than the many lesser issues which absorb the Church's attention.

In sending forth these pages, the writer indulges the hope that the reader may find in them some material for use in the quiet hour and lonely place of daily meditation. If they shall haply furnish help suitable to the needs of any one who hungers for spiritual life or restoration, let him use them with sole reference to their professed aim. The value of spiritual reading depends upon its right use. It is not at all depreciatory of the intellectual faculty to insist that in religion its chief value consists in its power to spur the soul on towards God until itself is left far behind and the spiritual faculty becomes completely devoted to God by the strong simplicity of its unsyllabled trust. It is possible to engage in devotional reading, and even in the prayer of meditation (as also in theological and Bible study and sermon making), in such a manner that the progress of the soul in the knowledge of God is impeded or arrested. The mind experiences a vast amount of satisfaction in considering subjects of a religious character. These are immensely attractive from the mere intellectual point of view, and so attractive that even with some excitation of the devotional nature they tempt us to fall off into intellectual self-indulgence. When this temptation achieves the victory, thoughts about God interest the mind more than God Himself. An earnest man must be on his guard against this subtlety of self-love. As crafty as audacious, it seeks to pass off thoughts, reasonings, imaginations, indeed, all the play of the mind acting on divine themes, as equal in value and effect with the love of God, whereas, as all men know, the mind may be replete with theological lore and mighty in

the scriptures, while the spiritual nature remains as cold and hard as marble, with a fatal tendency to grow harder through increase of familiarity with things divine. Many a priest, through this devil's lure, this conceit of the intellect, has missed the blessing which fills thousands of unlettered saints with love for God, and has unconsciously glided into the hypocrisy of proclaiming truths which soften not his own heart. This is not the path of peace: its end is despair.

Let thoughts and considerations, arguments, fancies and imaginations, claim and possess their right place; but let us also forestall their improper use by the practice of intellectual humility and mortification. The greatest lesson we have to learn is how to fall at God's feet, without trains of thought, without points for meditation, without any mental activity whatever, without words even; how to fall down before Him oblivious of self because overwhelmed with the presence of His majesty; how to lie there mute and motionless, only loving, only adoring, only putting ourselves in His hands and leaving ourselves there. With such sacrifices He is well-pleased. He gets our love instead of our fine thoughts about love. This is the perfection of prayer, the meditation of the heart, the proper end of all mental activity. The right use of this book, therefore, should empty it of any presumed intrinsic value and discover to the soul where its true treasure is to be found.

The Nature of Sanctity.

CHAPTER I.

The Nature of Sanctity.

OUR first step must be to acquire a clear conception of that holiness without which no man shall see God. Many priests have made poor progress or none at all, because they have failed to grasp its essential principle, through indisposition to seek guidance, or, through that inertness and aversion to thoroughness which holds us all back in varying degrees, and often frustrates the sincerest purposes. We ought to dig down to the root of the matter; and if we have the courage to do that we shall discover of how little intrinsic value observances, and methods, and devotions, and offices are, in themselves; and, over against all our dependence upon external means and methods, we shall find the principle of charity vindicated as the source of all holiness and the virtue of all instruments.

I.—UNION WITH GOD BY CHARITY.

AS to the nature of the divine standard of sanctity, let us consider in what it consists.

Religion binds man back to God—that is, it renews lost relations. It gives him back again that birthright which he bartered for a mess of

pottage—that astonishing relation of oneness with God of which the characteristic feature was that God's life was ever passing over into the nature of man and ever upholding him in the possession of the Divine image.

This union with God was the predominant end He had in view in man's creation, as it must be in man's restoration. We cannot too often recur to the words of S. Augustine, "Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and we shall seek for rest in vain until we find it in Thee." He is the soul's true home. The prodigal must return and be joined in blessed union with the Father once more.

In order to effect this restoration of relations, there must of necessity be a free and active co-operation of the divine and human wills, which co-operation implies: (1), upon the part of God's majesty, acts of condescension to our low estate; and (2), upon the part of man, the aspiration and actualized elevation of the soul to God.

Is there a principle of operation common to the divine and human wills which, when actively put forth, shall restore the lost union?

When we contemplate the primal conditions of man's estate as a being fresh from the hands of his benevolent creator, we perceive that the principle of union by which God and man were joined in one was love (charity), and that its operation was perfect as well in man as in God. In God it was pure complacency, or love for man growing in part out of admiration and approval. In man it was a perfect affection for God, a love of the whole heart, mind, and strength, without a strain of self-love. But that ideal estate suffered a change. Man lost union with God as the inevitable consequence of his loss of supreme love for God through the entrance of self-love. Consequently God could no longer look upon man with a love of complacency. He could not approve of the creature's preference for himself rather than for his Creator. We therefore infer that in order to the restoration of the original union of man with God, thus broken, it is necessary that the principle of union, which was love, should be the principle of its restoration.

The faculty of loving was not destroyed, though its supreme object was changed. It

remained, for it is necessary to an intelligent being that it love something. Whether the object of our love be God, or creatures, or ourselves, we must love; for love, as well as intelligence, pertains to personality. Have we not felt its power from earliest years? How often has it drawn us to one thing, repelled us from another, and withheld us from a third. It is the determining force in us. "Good or bad loves make good or bad lives." "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he."

The faculty of love, then, must be won back from its sad defection and replaced upon Him who is the only proper object of loyal affection. Since the loss of original union was occasioned by the loss of love for God, love is the key to restore relations. It unlocks the door of heaven to the condescension of the Father, and the door of the heart to the ascension of the child to His presence. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three, but the greatest of these is charity."

II.—THE CONDESCENSION OF DIVINE LOVE.

That God inclines to us is the one thought, sublime, uplifting, heart-melting, to which the whole race clings, by which the sorrows of the

world are soothed, of the sweetness of which the heart loves to drink deeply. O, what would life be to the most abandoned of men did not this heavenly light at times penetrate the darkness of their souls?

But there is another side to think of. The consciousness that there is nothing in us upon which He can look with complacency, and that, on the contrary, our record is positively displeasing to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, renders it difficult to maintain as a practical influence on life the conviction that God's affection for us is real. Nothing holds the world back from universal surrender to a love so astonishing, except the shadows cast on its reality by the doubts and fears which our sins beget. It is the misery of the pagan that he cannot see or believe that God is love.* It is the triumph of

*In a recent volume, by Miss Nelson, giving some account of the present empress Tuen of China, we read how she and her father were reduced to the edge of starvation after the Tai-ling rebellion. Some one gives her food and tells her of Christ. She reports this to her father.

"But who is Jesus?" the curious child persisted.

"He is the God of barbarians and devils, Tuen," her father said, sternly. "He is not so wise as Confucius, nor so great as Buddha, else you would have heard of him long ago."

"And yet he called him a God of Love," she went on musingly, not heeding her father's frown, "Is there a God of Love?"

"No," Niu Tsang said shortly. "All the gods hate the children of men, but because we offer prayers and incense they sometimes listen to us."

religion when a soul passes out of suspicion of that love, and leans on it fearlessly, like a child.

Of course, it cannot be the love of complacency; for man, as he is, is precisely the opposite of the Creator's intention. He is the contradiction of Adam. Sin is so essentially hateful that if God did not abhor it He would not be God.

If, then, the divine love cannot justify itself by approval or admiration of man in his fallen estate, we must seek its ultimate reason in the immeasurable pity which God feels for His sinful creatures. It is not a love of complacency; it is a love of compassion.

But it is more. Its sources are deeper and have their spring in the very heart of God's heart. Love as mercy is wonderful enough, but more wonderful is the love of God as a love of consanguinity. He is the Father of the whole family of man, and we are His children, partakers of the blood royal, nearer to Him than the angels, united to Him not only by natural kinship, but also by the closer bond of our relation to His Only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ. And He loves us *as* He loves our Elder Brother.

“So dear, so very dear to God,
More dear I cannot be;
The love wherewith He loves the Son,
Such is His love to me.”

It was this love of consanguinity which marked out the path of the Son of God to Bethlehem, bore Him up in all the atoning sorrows of His life, gave Him victory on the cross and at the sepulchre, and put His humanity in the place of honor at God's right hand. There, by the consummate force of love, our human nature has entered into the closest fellowship with the divine, and through its perfection and power floods the world with the products of this mysterious but real bond of consanguinity.

Man has not retained the family resemblance, and has disgraced his descent, nor does he own the obligations which his kinship imposes upon him; but, in spite of his filial defection, the love of God does not wane, but rather waxes stronger, for is he not the child beloved, the object of infinite affection? Some one has said that the foundation of all religion is not that man, restored to union, should be madly in love with God, but that God is madly in love with man. We appreciate the

poverty of language when we seek to describe the human affections ; how, then, can we hope to define a love that passeth knowledge ?

And the Father's amazing interest in man attests its reality in practical ways. We put much stress on the necessity of seeking God. Yes, it is necessary, for, if we do not seek, we shall not find. But it is a greater truth, and as necessary, that God is seeking us, that He pursues us in order that He may overtake and win us back to the paths of righteousness. He does not sit in passive majesty upon the throne of His glory, awaiting our approach ; O, no ! He comes down to our earthly level and mean paths, that He may find and bring home His lost children ! All the secret monitions of conscience, the strivings of the Holy Spirit, the means of grace that hedge us about, reveal the passionate energies that would almost take possession of our wills and compel us to seek holiness. Yes, He takes the initiative ! When there was no eye to pity, He pitied ; when there was no arm to save, He brought salvation. It is He, not man, who is the first to seek. He followed the trail of the serpent in pursuit of His fascinated children, and

He is pursuing them still. The first to seek, He is the last to forsake, and forsakes only when they have hopelessly forsaken Him.

It is the love of consanguinity, but it is more. There is a mystery in this love which no word can fathom. Sin is so much more offensive in His sight than in ours, so unjustifiable, so contrary to reason and the eternal fitness of things, that it seems as if it would be only justice should He condemn man to share with the fallen angels their sore penalties; but in His incomprehensible mercy He has interposed on man's behalf to the intent that he may become an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven; and this stupendous condescension has been accompanied by an act still more incomprehensible, in that He has illustrated His love by the supreme test of self-sacrifice. His identification with the human race was so profound that He could not but die to save His children from their fate. His love was red with the stain of blood. This is indeed the love that passeth knowledge!

III—THE UPRISING OF HUMAN LOVE.

The truth of God's love for us is the fire that kindles our love—"we love Him because He first loved us."

There are many motives for spiritual advancement, but none so potent as love. A priest may say, "I must," through fear of consequences; or, "I ought," from a sense of obligation; or, "I will," which is the response of love. Fear and obligation are natural virtues; man did not lose them in the fall. But the love of God was lost, and only God can restore it. We need not reject the natural virtues. Let fear do its perfect work. Let us obey the "categorical imperative" of conscience. But the holy priest ever seeks with importunate hunger to be fed with the manna of love which cometh down from heaven.

The inclination of the heart to God and its positive surrender to Him, by compulsion of love, is, as we have shown, the beginning and end of sanctity.

There is no other way of going to God, and He has no other way of coming to us. This is not

a maxim of human wisdom—not the cream of the experience of the saints, merely; it is the golden precept both of the law and the gospel, as our Lord taught when the Pharisee put the question, “Master, which is the great commandment in the law?”

This, then, is the nature of that sanctity to which every priest is pledged—union with God by charity—the love of God for man, and man’s for God and man; and it is this which lights the way to all other theological virtues, and to perseverance in the same unto the end. For he who loves God must love the will of God. Love is the very spring and motive of obedience, and obedience is the test and measure of holiness. With love, the graces of sanctification are assured. It puts virtue into the means of grace, lifts them out of the slough of the mere sign, and transfigures them with the graces signified. And the deeper, truer, more tender our love for Him, the more entire our abandonment to His will. With pure love, there is a dying to self-will. Without love, religion loses unity and coherence through lack of an animating principle; its doctrines have no formative power

on the soul, its forms generate hypocrisy or superstition, its sacraments minister condemnation, and its atmosphere is naturalistic and worldly. Without love, there can be no true philanthropy, for the heart must be full of love for God before it can overflow and bless man. Without love, holiness is an unintelligible dream.

IV.—THE ORDER OF HUMAN LOVE.

The holy priest, seeking holy gifts from God, by the way of love, distinguishes between what is to be loved absolutely for its own sake, and what is to be loved relatively for God's sake. This is a heaven-wide difference, as we shall see.

An old writer gives a short definition of virtue, viz: that it is an ordered love (*ordo est amoris*) or a love of things according to their order and value; by which we understand our Lord's words ("this is the first and great commandment") to signify that, as God only is man's proper end and aim, we should educate the heart to love Him supremely, to prefer Him to every other lawful object of affection, to precede all philanthropy with the love of Him, as well as to suffuse all religion

with it, and, indeed, to bring to bear upon the conscience constantly the truth that only as we first love God can we truly love ourselves and others. Self-love, that is, selfishness in our relations to one's self, is not love at all, but a base and low passion, a spurious imitation of that virtue which, in its genuine form, is an imitation of God. Self-love is in reality self's enemy, as its final outcome shows, and when it takes on relations to one's neighbour, it is not love, but "bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." The love of neighbour and the love of self, then, are pure, noble, sanctifying, saving, only as they flow from and resemble the love we bear to God by which we love Him purely, without reference to our interests. Not to love such a Being as He reveals Himself to be to those who press towards the higher knowledge, would impede, if not arrest, spiritual growth, and involve the soul in grave perils. To expect nothing strengthens rather than impairs this pure love, nor would it stagger should God refuse to bestow comforts and seem to treat it with indifference. Per-

fect love is blind to everything but its perfect Object.

In order to aim at and diligently to seek the highest sanctity, the holy priest will therefore be governed by the order of love held forth in the commandment. God is the only being in existence who contains within Himself all the reasons or motives why He should be loved, and therefore the only being who may be loved supremely. If any other object of affection secure the primary place, such love is practical idolatry. Horrible, in the light of this truth, is the guilt of one who loves himself more than God. It were odious enough to prefer to Him some one dearer to us than life, but ten times more hatefully bad to give one's own wretched self the first place! God's claim upon us is not an arbitrary fiat of His will. The commandment rests on the love-worthy qualities of the Thrice Blessed and Holy One who permits us to call Him "Father," and who is to us at once father and mother. It were a prostitution of every thing which we call by the sacred name of love not to perceive His claim, by right of what He is, to the first place in our hearts. The love we bear to anything

else finds its orderly place at a lower level. It is love only as it gets its motive from the higher, for nothing else can truly be loved except as it is loved in and for God. He is the Heart of our heart.

V—LOVE A DEVELOPMENT.

A certain keenness of discernment, the fruit of humility and courage, tells the earnest priest that the acquirement of sincere love for God is a development, an education. In its first stages, the heart is able only to lisp its A B C, and many are the lessons to be learned before its honesty can look the dear Lord in the face and say, "Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." The priest perceives that the obligation of sanctity does not justify those who cleave to imperfect beginnings and find false peace in the remembrance of former attainments; indeed, he feels that it is a question how far they ought to be regarded as genuine if the heart desires not the increase of charity, for it is a recognized fact in the spiritual life that "not to gain is to lose; and not to advance is to fall back." "I consider it impossible for love to stand still," said S. Teresa. It is not wise, there-

fore, to faint by the way because one has not already attained, nor will the holy priest draw back from the pains of growth, the mortification of the flesh, the discipline of the will, and the struggles of the soul when in darkness and apparently unaided. On the contrary, he finds in the rudimentary lessons which have been taught him of the Holy Spirit, so much present joy, that had he no reason to expect more, he could spend his days in songs of gratitude for his present knowledge. He will not depreciate possessed blessings through desire for greater, but will use them out of love for the giver, and use them to best advantage as incentives of righteousness, "abounding yet more and more in all knowledge."

The Duty of Sanctity.

CHAPTER II.

The Duty of Sanctity.

THE cultivation of the Christian virtues with intention to aim at that measure of holiness, which our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified, and which He has required of His disciples, is more than the privilege of a few choice spirits—it is a duty obligatory upon all, and especially upon those who are called to the Holy Priesthood of His Church, since they are required as His undershepherds to be “wholesome examples and patterns of the flock of Christ.”

I.—ITS BASIS IN THE NATURE OF GOD.

THE holy priest is pledged by the very nature of the Divine Being to seek the utmost attainable conformity with His will and nature.

God is ineffably holy. Consummate spiritual excellence is the very essence of our idea of Him. Although we contemplate His moral attributes separately, it is only out of deference to our own weakness: in point of fact what we call attributes are an infinite synthesis of moral perfections, so

glorious, so resplendent with beauty, so inconceivably rich in all the qualities which are naturally innate in Divine Being, that nothing as perfectly expresses their general charm and splendor as the ascription, Holy! Holy! Holy!

The pages of revelation testify to God's moral beauty, but it is personally illustrated in utmost perfection in the incarnate Christ, who is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person; and this manifestation of the spiritual perfection of God arrests the attention and commands the admiration of the world. But its power is immeasurably deepened when the heart of man reaches an experimental knowledge of God, when belief passes into trust, when life transcends its own finite sphere and rests in the infinite love of God. Then, as never before, man discovers the awe-inspiring holiness of God, and then, as never before, with a glow of simple faith, he yields to the attractive power of that ideal purity which would draw all souls to itself. "As He which called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy."

God is, therefore, at once the model and motive of holiness. Holiness in man is the reproduction of His moral beauty and perfectness. It would be an immoral thought to conceive of Him as less than holy, and as immoral to think of Him as assenting to a lower standard for man. It would, therefore, be in the worst sense a dishonor to His very nature should His creatures propose to themselves a less perfect ideal. A low standard of moral character among the people is the inevitable result of a priesthood not aiming at the highest possible sanctity, but the worst of it is that there is but slight reflection of God's sanctity, notwithstanding He has most urgently commanded His image to be perfectly reproduced.

The obligation which rests upon a Christian priest to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord is implied in his vocation to the ministry.

II.—IN THE VOCATION TO THE PRIESTHOOD.

Vocation rests not upon favoring environment, or natural circumstances, but upon the predestination of God, who makes His will manifest: (1), in the internal pressure of conscience duly enlightened; (2), in the outward dispositions of His

providence, and (3), in the Church's perception that a man has this twofold call. "No man taketh this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron."

The call is individual, like that which came to Samuel at midnight in the temple's silence. It says to each one, "Thou art the man" of the divine selection, and great is the favor thou hast found in the eyes of the Lord; forget not the solemn citation: its bugle-note, resounding in memory's chambers, shall revive drooping courage, freshen thy sense of vocation, and to the end of life remind thee that thou art called pre-eminently to a life of holiness, and that thou shalt serve Christ best when thou art most like Christ.

The call is to a separate life—to a consecrated order, having peculiar functions; but also to a distinct type of character, in the acquisition of which the priest must spend his best strength and make every needed sacrifice. The call is a calling out from and a separation unto, severance going before consecration; and consecration involving specific traits which are peculiar to the office. In a good sense, all Christians contribute to the solidarity

of the Christian priesthood, but there is a priestly character which is impressed upon those only who receive the sacrament of Holy Order, and that character has its perfect fulfilment only in the most exalted acquisitions of sanctity.

The call is to that state of life wherein the priest shall find his best opportunity of working out his salvation. "Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine; continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee." He may, therefore, with certainty infer from the call to the ministry that divine wisdom has selected this as for him the most favorable environment, the most propitious career, the safest path to heaven. Many are they who would have been lost, if they had not given heed to the summons of the Master to serve Him in the ministry.

III.—IN THE VOW OF THE PRIEST.

The obligatory character of this summons to cultivate holiness appears in striking relief in the vow wherewith vocation meets its response.

A priest's vow is the willing, intelligent, and heartfelt promise of a free man, made, in the

presence of witnesses, to the Most High God, by which promise he binds himself for life to certain specified duties and to all their implications, objective and subjective. Here are seven distinct features:

1. The vow is not enforced, but freely made by a free agent.

2. It is done with a good understanding of the act.

3. It is done *toto corde*, as an act of love.

4. It is public.

5. It is of the nature of an oath before God.

6. It is not temporary as to its term.

7. Its subject-matter is definite—specified or implied.

As to its nature the priestly vow involves three things:

1. The renunciation of everything, internal and external, which is inconsistent with the vow. As in confirmation a person solemnly owns himself “bound to believe and to do” certain things, so here the priest acknowledges obligations which are to bind him like chains, and require of him

the sacrifice of many former liberties. He becomes *δοῦλος Χριστοῦ*, and finds in this sweet servitude true liberty.

2. The consecration of all that he is or has, or ever expects to be or to have, to the glory of Christ and the service of His Church. This perfect consecration is not the consecration of a perfect man. He has nothing save his nothingness to offer, but with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

3. The resolution of his fixed heart that he will aim at the highest attainable degree of absorption in the blessed will of God, ever pressing on to know Him better, to live in holy familiarity with His majesty, and by the power of humility to make less of self as God becomes more and more to him, so that self shall take no pleasure in the things of nature except as they are necessary, and no pleasure in anything out of God. Any other ideal of life would be belittling.

IV.—IN THE DUTIES OF THE PRIEST.

The priest is pledged to seek the best gifts of grace by the character of his duties and the relation he bears to the great High Priest.

By his ordination he is brought into fellowship with One who was not only "without sin," but was also radiant with the spiritual splendor of heaven. The Word made flesh was clothed with "the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." It is necessary continually to reanimate our apprehension of His awful purity, not so much because of any doubt that He was and is immaculate, as because all of our personal contact with humanity is with imperfect humanity. Instinctively, we correlate moral deficiency with the nature of man, and for this reason we require a strong effort and many of them to renew and maintain with firm adoration the conception of a Man "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." It is this wonderful Christ whom the priest represents. "*Qui mihi ministrat, me sequatur.*"

This relation involves a virtual impartation of His mediatorial functions to His agents. He is the One Great *Sacerdos*; as a bloody offering the One Great Sacrifice was "once for all;" but His eternal priesthood did not cease, as the imperfect priesthood of the old law did with the dying

priests. "This man, because He liveth forever, hath an unchangeable priesthood." As our priest, He hath "entered into heaven now to appear in the presence of God for us," but, as our priest, He has come again. "I will not leave you comfortless, I will come to you." He has come to do for us what could not be done on earth did He not do it. Without His potential presence, we should have neither the sign nor the grace of a sacrament, while the Church would be a rope of sand without coherence or corporeity. Truth would be perpetual fluctuation, and the great Interposition would have dropped to the level of a historic incident and been superceded ages ago by new devices of religion.

But His promise has been fulfilled—He is with His Church, and shall be to the end of the world. He does not "dwell among us" in visible majesty as when S. John beheld Him "full of grace and truth."

"He walketh no more by blue Galilee's shore,
And Gethsemane's prayer has dissolved in thin air,"

but He is with us still. What He did in the flesh, seen and heard of men, He is doing instrumentally.

The One Essential Priest, He pours out His power upon a delegated priesthood. The principle is—"in Christ's stead." It is Christ's priestly work that is done, and the virtue is from Him alone. The representative priest stands at the Gate Beautiful of the Church, to baptize, to absolve, to offer sacrifice, to teach, to evangelize, to perform every function to which he was called, doing all "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth," but ever protesting, "ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk? * * * His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong."

The great priest, then, is the potential baptizer, confirmer, absolver, sacrificer; and thus hath the Church ever taught. Said S. Augustine: "Paul baptizes, Christ baptizes; Peter baptizes, Christ baptizes; Judas baptizes, Christ baptizes."

This representative relation can bear to the priest's heart but one message, and that is—"be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." Every act of his priestly life presupposes his personal

holiness, and is, if rightly used, a grace to that end.

Behold him as he ascends the steps of the altar! At that holy spot, he is to say and do, definitely, what the Son of God did and said at the Last Supper. O, solemn moment—to take the bread into his hands, and to break it, and to say the very Words!—to lay his hand on the bread, and say, “This is My Body;” to take the cup into his hand, as did the Lord on the same night in which He was betrayed, and utter over it the same omnific Words!—and then to make before the Majesty of heaven, with these holy gifts now offered, the commanded Memorial, and give to His disciples His very Body and Blood! O, to be called and commissioned to do for Christ what Christ did in the “large upper room,” and in His name to perpetuate the tremendous objective reality of those Holy Mysteries, what manner of man ought a priest to be! What alterations of dominant motive should come to him! What new departures of character are demanded of him! What purity, what humility, what dying to the world and living unto God, should be his!

V.—IN HIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE
GOOD OF THE CHURCH.

The holy priest is pledged to the highest possible sanctity by the special responsibility which rests on his order to set forward the kingdom of heaven among men.

He knows that Christ Jesus is on His mediatorial throne, that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth, and that "He must reign till He hath put all things under His feet." He exults in the sure dawning of the day, when, at the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father. In the confidence of this perfect hope, he can hear the trumpet of the seventh angel, shouting, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."

But (with a sad heart, and, sometimes, with weary plaint, How long, O Lord ?) he sees that final victory is the "far off divine event;" nor has he forgotten S. Paul's farewell words to the presbyters of Ephesus, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the

Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Yes, times of refreshing will be succeeded by times of depression. Ages of faith shall merge into ages of unbelief. Through valleys, as over mountains, the ark of God shall be borne forward.

And how evident it is that these alterations correspond to the character of the people who profess and call themselves Christians. If they are dominated by the spirit of the world, the Church languishes. When they seek first the kingdom of righteousness, the Church arises and shines.

That it is the will of God to subject the cause of heaven to the vacillations of earth is the testimony of history, and that it shall be thus to the end is taught us by S. Peter, for he says, "In the last days shall perilous times come."

The holy priest analyzes the common responsibility of the Church to find it as much an indi-

vidual as a general obligation, and that he is personally answerable for all that he can do.

But a further step in the analysis reveals to him the larger influence on the fortunes of religion which is exerted by one who fully exemplifies its principles in his interior character. Not what a priest *does*, but what he is, makes him a power for good. He must take heed to the doctrine, but first to himself, says S. Paul. How can he bring disciples to perfection, who does not seek perfection? To build up the Church, he must be growing unto an holy temple in the Lord: How can he keep the Faith if he has not faith? Where is his honor, his manhood, when he is aiming to do for others what he does not do for himself? How can he accomplish heaven-blessed results when the love of God beats low in his heart? It is one thing to carry the cross as a banner—quite another to bear it as a burden which bruises the flesh and crushes out self-love. Ah, what happiness is his when he considers how his daily spiritual life (in itself worthy no future but oblivion) is contributive to the final triumph of Christ, and how closely he is thus conformed to the likeness of the Son

of God, who, in the unutterable intimacy of His communion with the Father, said, "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself that they also might be sanctified through the truth."

VI.—IN THE CHARACTER OF THE TIMES.

The current activities of the day, tending to exteriority and material standards of success, demand heroic fidelity to God in the inner life of the Christian priest.

There is intense activity in all that pertains to external growth. The stream rushes and swells, and even lashes itself into foam, but it is not the deep-flowing river. In the sphere of the individual Christian life there is much truth in the remark of the late Bishop of Brechin: "The tear-stained book of private prayer of Lancelot Andrewes, the dying meditations of Richard Hooker on the 'number and nature of angels and their blessed obedience and order, without which peace could not be in heaven,' are almost as unreal to this age as the rapturous communings of Igna-

tius in the cave at Manresa, or the mysterious exhibitions of Divine Love which visited Francis of Assisi on the mountains of Alvernia." We are tempted to plead in extenuation that we live in the age of steam and electricity, and that we must be governed by the spirit of our time. Yes, but steam is an invisible vapor, generated in secret tubes, and electricity, before it flashes, must be begotten in the darkness. Spiritual development cannot be healthful unless its forces have their genesis in the quiet retreats of prayer. Work is a vain thing, if we do not get away from it very often that we may have time to practise silently that interior self-possession of the heart, through detachment from all created things, which will keep our souls calm, and pure, and right before God, and so enable us to do really effective service in external things. The remark applies with peculiar force to those priests who are serving God in the whirl of great cities, and are not so wholly deafened by the clangor of the age but that they can still hear the Aeolian music of the Spirit breathing upon the strings of their hearts, and reminding them of that higher life which is "quietness and assurance forever."

Priests should trace the line of their descent. Follow it back, step by step, till they reach the first apostles. It brings them to the presence of the Lord. There He stands among His disciples with the dew of the morning upon His garments, and from their number He chooses out twelve to be His apostles, upon whom He will build the foundations of His Church. But where has He been through the night that preceded this first ordination? We must go to S. Luke for the answer: "And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God; and when it was day He called unto Him His disciples, and of them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles." The voice which commissioned them has gone out into all the world and through all the ages, calling men to the apostolic ministry, but calling them to no less lofty ideal of that ministry than He Himself exemplified. What need had He for retiracy and recollection, for self-possession and serenity, which they do not more than share? What privileges had He under the shadow of the Almighty which may not in kind, if not in degree, be theirs?

O, my God, when shall some strong voice strike the souls of ordered men, and rouse them to life? When shall devotion to secondary things be made to blush over its presumption? When shall this abounding interest in everything but the one thing needful hide its shameless face? Are we never again to have among us men who shall illustrate their vocation as imitators (*μιμηταὶ*) of God?

An English ecclesiastic has well said (and O that his words may not fall on stony places!): "We are assured every week of the year that we are passing through an ecclesiastic crisis of some kind or other, and what we really have to do, and what Christians have really to think about, is how they are going to face this or that political problem. What is going to be their duty towards this problem of disestablishment, and that great problem of another kind? And you would judge that was the main thing which Christianity had to be doing; it was to be forever adjusting itself to this or that particular situation, and learning to confront this or that of the world's great movements as it appears. This is just what our Lord bids us not to do. The point is whether we are

nourishing the fundamental basis of spiritual life. This is forever and forever the real question."

VII.—IN OTHER CONSIDERATIONS.

Every other conceivable aspect of the subject emphasizes the obligation which rests upon ordered men to be able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit.

1. While the holiest of men only dimly reflect God, and while it is unfair to judge Him by their best, it is still true that the honor of God is very much involved in the character of those who profess to be His, and especially of those who are called in addition to be "ensamples to the flock." Their best attainments dimly yet truly reflect God. On the other hand, those who are half-hearted or no-hearted as to the higher walks of the life of faith, raise, in the mind of the world—the great critical world so ready to detect falseness!—the question whether or not religion is a reality, than which no proposition could be more destructive of reverence for God's person and of consideration for His will. It is a thought which pierces like a stiletto to think of the depressed condition of

interior religion among the people, matched, if not occasioned, by the spiritual laxity of their priests, and then to reflect that His Divine Majesty is tried and condemned for their lukewarmness. O, what manner of men, what crucifiers of self, ought priests to be, seeing how decisive their influence upon the laity, and seeing how God's way is known upon earth by the walk and conversation of priests and people who profess to love Him.

2. Everyone should secretly put to himself this question, Am I held and hereafter to be held accountable only for my life as it is? for this present poor measure of response to the command, Be holy? Or, must I answer now and in that day for what God's law has enjoined and God's grace made possible? There are diversities of gifts and of vocations, neither can every disciple be counted "among the seraphim." In grace, as in nature, one star differeth from another star in glory. But no Christian man has any vocation to hide his light under a bushel. If it is only a spark, a single ray, he must shine as a light (*φωστήρ* = light-source) in the world. O, hour of crisis, when a

priest perceives that all his tendencies are in the direction of conventional respectability, and that he is held back from nobler planes of character by earthly passions and aims! God help him to be strong in that hour, and especially help that one who, having humble gifts and "hard lines," is tempted to hide his Lord's money in the earth!

3. Motives of action grounded on future exposure to penalty or consequence rest lightly on the conscience at present, but surely current events do not show that law to have been repealed which fixes the character of the harvest by the nature of the seed that is sown. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." O, heart-searching Father, if Thou art exposed to the indignity of being judged of men according to the character of Thy people, there is coming a time when they shall be judged of Thee, and may they spare themselves the consternation of the judgment-seat by present courage in the acquisition of holiness! Restore to them the grace of fear and trembling, lest for their ears dulled and eyes closed it shall be to

them that "whosoever hath not from him shall be taken away even that he hath."

4. It ought to be a great deal to the priest in the way of stimulus to consider the intensity beyond our power to conceive it of the interest which the Father of spirits has in the revival of spiritual reality among us. Naturally the Creator's delights are with the sons of men, and His joy grows with their growth. It is a false humility which shrinks from being and doing what God has enjoined and what is well-pleasing in His sight. There is far too little of that better sort of lowliness which thinks so little of present attainments that it hungers and thirsts to be conformed to the whole will of God.

5. No priest is too young to give serious thought to this: "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Only a few moments are left to those who have squandered years of opportunity. How many can he count upon who is presuming upon his youth and postponing the supreme issue of his life? It is high time to awake out of this sleep of spiritual apathy and sloth—to break this spell of wordly conformity and professionalism in the

ministry. "Let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armour of light."

The Grace of Sanctity.

CHAPTER III.

The Grace of Sanctity.

THE notes of holiness by which the soul is united to God reveal themselves in knowledge and love. The holy soul knows and loves God: he knows and does not love himself. Sin is to him an odious thing, and, as long as he vigorously hates it, he has little to fear from it; on the contrary, this hatred promotes the love of God. But graces should not be confused with gifts. Gifts are natural endowments which, when sanctified by religious motives, promote efficiency in the cause of Christ. But graces are the product of the rule of the Holy Spirit in the inner man, giving beauty and strength to character. Men with strong inherent and acquired gifts, but sluggish spiritual development, make slight impress on others for good, although they may cause much noise in the world for a time. Spiritual men who seek the virtues of religion with diligence are the men of influence, whatever their gifts. The former are "babes in Christ," unable to help themselves or do much for others. S. Paul, when he arose to a nobler development, said, "When I became a man I put away childish things."

I.—REVERENCE.

WHEN the Holy Spirit draws near to the interior life of a priest who hungers after righteousness, and whose prayer has long been, "O, for a closer walk with God!" there follows such a sense of the Divine, such an awe of the Person of God, that his former reverence appears to have been cold and mechanical. A new experience begins in which his whole being is more and more pervaded, consciously, with apprehension of the glory, beauty, and benignity of God. Increase of reverence is one of the first fruits of a more earnest spiritual life, and this is not surprising when we consider that holiness is not only God's approach to man, but man's to God. How beautiful is the definition of reverence which the late Bishop Thorold (a man of profound devotion) has given us. He says:

"Reverence—if we may venture, though with much diffidence, to define it—is the habitual, almost instinctive recognition of a goodness which it cannot emulate; of a wisdom which it cannot fathom; of an Almighty Power which fills the soul

with unspeakable awe, yet of a love which in its inexpressible tenderness passeth knowledge. It is the strongest as well as the deepest souls that are fullest of reverence. It is also they who know most and love best who are readiest to say—

“‘Let knowledge grow from more to more,
But more of reverence in us dwell,
That mind and will, according well,
May make one music as before,
But vaster.’

“Reverence, in a sentence, is created and sustained by the constant thought of God, which helps us not so much to go in and out of His presence as ever to stand in it, with heart and mind and feet and eyes veiled, lest His glory smite them. Reverence, which, while it restrains the lips, feeds the fire within of holy and even rapturous meditation, is slow to promise, but does not perform less for its not promising, and invisibly moulds the highest and finest type of character the Church can ever see on earth.”

Our Lord has not left us in doubt as to the place which reverence occupies in the estimation of His Father, for, in describing the proper atti-

tude of spiritual men in His presence, He says that the true worshippers worship Him in spirit and in truth, and adds, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." He waits not for their devout approach, but goes forth to find them. He is quick to perceive and glad to accept their homage, for reverence brings with it so much. It gathers all the virtues into a synthesis of awe, prostrate before the throne. It is truth offering the sacrifice of the spirit, it is humility in the dust, it is love gazing upward, it is penitence making the sign of the cross, it is faith singing its *ter sanctus*, it is hope adoring with joy unspeakable.

The spirit of reverence throws its peculiar charm over the person of the devout priest. Such men make us think of heaven. An outward serenity, a quiet dignity, attends them. We feel that it is the sign of much interior communion with God, and that their self-repression of manner evidences a purpose diligently to fill themselves with the spirit of holy fear.

II.—REPENTANCE.

The soul which is suffused with reverence will not lack in penitence, for the two are closely

allied. There are favored moments of adoration in which the faculties, oblivious of themselves, become absorbed in contemplation; but usually, when the glory of the Divine prostrates the soul in awe, it is overwhelmed with its own unworthiness.

It is appalling to consider what power has been given to the free will of man. It possesses the power to choose God and lose itself in His will; but it also has the power to deny God, oppose His counsels, overturn His purposes, and brush away His commandments, yea, His very mercies, like cobwebs. It would seem that the simple possession of such a power ought to drive man in terror from the exercise of it in opposition to God, and lead him to hedge himself about with obstacles, thickly planted and barbed, to restrain his liberty. That must he do sooner or later, or plead with his God to do it. O, my God, who hast permitted me to acquire this execrable freedom, as the penalty of my rebellion, I am resolved that it shall become as odious in my sight as it is in Thine!

Just consider the infamy of it! Man is created in the image of God, and endowed with every

virtue, natural and supernatural. That he may be like God, he is enriched with reason and intelligence; but as it is not possible that intelligence should exist without will, and as will must of necessity be free, he is also endowed with free will. In all this, the Creator proposes to people this planet with an order of beings who shall serve Him in purity and holiness forever, not by compulsion, but as the free homage of their wills. And what happens? The created will takes issue with its Creator, adopts the policy of Satan, and thwarts the counsels of infinite wisdom.

There is a height, and depth of unrevealed, possibly unrevealable, mystery in the divine attitude towards sin. How mercy and righteousness could kiss each other in that terrible hour, how forbearance could stay the hand of retribution, and how the promise of life could make speed to reach the ear which deserved to hear the sentence of death, we may never know, and the mystery is still repeating itself every day; but we do know, and therein do rejoice with joy unspeakable, that there came at once an economy of forbearance, and to the fallen race of mankind was given the opportunity of repentance.

And repentance—what is it but the response which the soul makes when it comes to see how fearfully the will has prostituted its power and abused its liberty by antagonizing God? In dismay and self-loathing, it recoils from the abuse of a God-implanted faculty, rebels against the tyranny, and turns again to God with a broken heart.

Penitence is: (1), internal, and (2), external.

Internally, it accentuates the voice of conscience, and silences the whispers of self-love. It reveals the disastrous effects of sin upon the will, which began in freedom, but ended in slavery; and shows how, having become the servant of sin, it is no longer capable of right choices. It brings out sin's sinfulness in such hideous relief that pride is leveled to the dust. There would be little dearth of humility in the world, could our first experiences of inward penitence be perpetuated.

External penitence is the outward expression of the rankling sorrow of the soul. The two are a unit. It would be an error to think that penitence consists exclusively of sighs and tears, of penances and austerities; but it is not possible to

feel real contrition in the inward man without its getting utterance, and without some outward form of self-contempt and punishment.

All penitence, whether within or outward, is a work rather than a sentiment; indeed, a priest seeking intimacy of relation with God shall long since have discovered that true conversion to God necessitates the substitution of the practical in place of the sentimental. Penitence in the inner man is contrition, which includes self-condemnation, humiliation, and compunction, in varying degrees in different persons. In its outward expression, it comprises self-examination and confession, and there are three tests of sincerity, which are no more practical in their nature than the contrition which precedes them. (1). Reparation, or restitution, is the method by which the penitent rights wrongs, or makes amends, or satisfies the claim of conscience. (2). By renunciation he expresses his horror of sin as it has been his reigning sovereign; abjures his allegiance, and abandons particular offences which have tripped him up. (3). By resolution he firmly pledges himself to live conformably to the commands of his Merciful God.

Penitence may be occasioned variously, but its chief exciting cause is the conviction of God's love. We have before mentioned the difficulty of gaining this conviction in a degree so strong that it shall become the motive of action. One reason is that there is nothing in us, by nature, upon which God can look with complacency; and another is that by sins we become positively offensive to Him, and we know it. Nevertheless, He loves us as objects of pity, and as His own dear children, and it is this parental aspect of His love which most beautifies and ennobles it.

Now, when the heart perceives how the will has dishonored its Maker and cast His will to the winds, it does not stop to dwell upon the horrible nature of sin, but presses on to consider against whom it has sinned—the One Being in the universe whom we can justly call an almighty friend, One who loves us with an infinite love, who is father as well as friend, and is not willing that any should perish. Then it is that God's love melts the soul into self-contempt, and then comes all that poignancy of remorse which gives the Christian life its sombre hue. Even the smile of

heaven in absolution cannot hinder many a secret tear over past sins; for penitence, though it may weep its way to the mercy-seat, cannot obscure the memory. Nor would the holy priest wish to be exempted from sorrows so sacred and medicinal, for he knows full well that a heart not broken by penitence day by day must suffer a diminishing perception of the great love; while he also knows how strongly an abiding penitence, internally felt and outwardly expressed, inclines to prayer and self-denial, promotes humility, gives fresh capacity for sacramental grace, and strengthens the soul to gaze more fondly upon the ineffable beauty of God.

But a well-developed penitence embraces more than remembered or present sins. There is the interior possibility of future sin. The holy priest is more suspicious of himself the nearer he approaches God. He realizes that spiritual adversaries have a terrible ally in the still unvanquished concupiscence of his heart, which is the fuel of sin. His penitence cannot unmake the past—its record is irrevocable. But he can do more with respect to future possibilities—he can forearm himself

against the evil day, and double his hourly watch upon the heart; he can multiply his self-surrenders to God's keeping power, judiciously practise disciplines, and keep his whole being under the pure light of that love divine which is so much stronger than the dying shadows of sin in the sanctified breast.

Christian people may be divided into two classes—those who have repented, and those who do repent; by which we mean that some remember the time when they repented and some do not remember the time when they did not repent. Continuous penitence at every stage and under every experience of the Christian life is the ordinary state of a growing soul. By the very necessity of his purpose to secure union with God by charity, the priest repeats conviction and conversion day after day until contrition becomes his habitual state within, and its outward pains his daily practice. What was, at first beginning, a task and a trial, now spreads its sombre but sacred veil over the soul without the conjuration of a special need or emergency, but spontaneously and easily. And this is a certain sign that compunc-

tion is genuine, and that contrition has matured into habit. Would the holy priest be assured that he has passed out of casual into habitual penitence?—he has only to ascertain by observation of his soul whether its action is quiet, like a flowing river, unforced, spontaneous, simple, and child-like.

III.—THE VALUE OF MAN.

Of all the surprises which come to a priest in the processes of sanctification, none is greater than the lesson of his own relative importance and value with respect to God and his fellow men.

Should we catch some glimpses of his inner estate and hear some whispers of his self-contempt, we would know how lowly he appears in his own eyes, and how impossible it would be to convince him that his penitence and self-depreciation are too abject. In truth they are not too abject—they stand for realities. With photographic accuracy they represent him as he is, not as he once fancied himself to be, not as our flattering judgment accounts him to be, not as popular opinion measures him, but as he knows himself to be by

many infallible proofs, brought to light in the presence of the Holy One. O, how the little lamps of his former conceit paled their ineffectual fires when the Sun of righteousness arose and he came out into its light!

There are three antecedent propositions, with which a priest must be, as it were, saturated, before he can make any progress in that line of ascension which begins with self-sufficiency and ends at the blessed heights of humility.

First, that God is the primary and only positive good, and that as His combined attributes constitute a splendor of perfection purer than mankind's noblest conceptions of Him, He is to be desired above everything, and to be loved more than anything—adored, loved, desired for His own sake, without consideration of benefits. At first the priest perceived Him as light forcing its way through “a horror of darkness;” but there came a time, a “morning without clouds” (perhaps at a moment when he was standing at the altar), when God shined out of Zion the perfection of beauty, and thereafter the spiritual life was less a consideration of personal safety than of the

declarative glory of this wonderful Being. God was seen to be All in all, and the larger vision brought with it such a sense of His glory and beauty that the mind was overwhelmed, the heart melted, the will prostrate with awe, and the passions washed to the color of snow. Then it became evident that to love God, one must love Him not because He is "my God," but because He is Himself. It is not a defect to love Him on account of benefits bestowed, but the highest form of love is attained when love forgets itself in adoration, and pours out its affection for God-in-Himself.* Then choosing Him as its chief good and only end, the soul sings its daily song of triumph—"whom have I in the heavens but Thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee."

Second, that fallen man as a moral being does not stand in a relation of intrinsic value to God.

* "I have known men who came to God for nothing else but just to come to Him, they so loved Him."

"Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Should I not love Thee well?
Not for the hope of winning heaven,
Nor of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining ought,
Nor seeking a reward:
But as Thyself hast loved me,
O ever-loving Lord!"

In the mere scale of being, leaving out the question of merit, he is the mote, the atom. Consider the insignificance of one man among millions of men. Consider that he who thinks himself to be something was nothing a century ago, and will be nothing a century hence. In vain shall "mossy marbles" buffet remorseless time in their effort to prolong the memory of him. Consider that he shares with the highest creatures their insignificance, for even angels charge themselves with folly in the presence of God. But consider man as wanting in merit. One person may be better or worse than another, as we judge men, but how these moral variations shade off into nothingness before the spotless purity of God! How contemptible, also, in that presence appear those estimates of value which we pass upon ourselves when measured by the human standard! But how hard to put ourselves under that higher standard, which cuts up pride by the roots and requires penance! Alas, how many evade these severities altogether! And how many who have traversed the *via dolorosa* of spiritual self-knowledge in part, shrink from the final stages of the journey! He stops

short of God who will not see himself as he is. But if his determined will press on, the priest is drawn closer to the center of spiritual light, the sense of moral insignificance increases, and the soul discovers a new and deeper meaning in the words when, with the jubilant Church, it sings, "For Thou only art holy."

His true measurement is thus revealed to the priest who diligently seeks God. Nothing that grace bestows does he reckon to his own account, and, therefore, no attainment impairs this low estimate of his value. On the contrary, as the soul advances toward God, sin appears more black and inexcusable than ever. There are no penitent tears so bitter as those of the saints.

Third, that whatever is indispensable to the remedial union of man with God must come from above. Nature has lost her power of recuperation. The will is like a bird whose wing is broken—it can no longer soar, but lies prone upon the earth, and will fly no more if some pitying hand heal not its hurt. "Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us and gave Himself for us." He came down from above, and with Him came

all the virtues of the sanctified life. They are a donation from the supernatural world; infused, not natural; not old qualities burnished up, but new qualities poured in, and both old and new so fused together that they operate as one principle of action. The ordinary natural virtues are acquired in the use of natural forces, but the virtues which are of grace do not have their fountain in us at all; they are, as it were, angels of God descending into receptive hearts to rule, purify, and perfect the baptismal life. With them comes sufficient grace for the needs of to-day, and with them, as a possibility, every degree of sanctity in this life, and the beatific vision in heaven at last.

IV.—THE HELP OF GOD.

These three antecedent propositions do not lead to a conclusion very flattering to the pride of the natural heart; but there are other hearts to whom they are sweeter than honey and the honeycomb, for the simple reason that they accord with the truths of experience, and point the way to a state in which, by the alchemy of grace, the base metal of their nothingness is changed into

precious gold. The conclusion to which they lead^{*} is that man's extremity is God's opportunity, and that the only remaining competence of nature is to seek His help.

The inability of man to restore the old order of union which was lost by sin once confessed, he must look to God, who wills not that any creature shall miss his end. This sense of sinking helplessly away from God puts an awful vehemence into the prayer for mercy and interposition, and happy is he whose prayers never lose that urgent tone! The priest who knows his need, "ever facing eastward amid the whirl of life," resolves to throw himself upon the arm of strength; and this he accomplishes when by intention and act he surrenders himself wholly into the custody of that arm.

There is nothing more beautiful in man, more pleasing to God, more fruitful of supernatural results, than the surrender of nature to grace. For when nature gives up its old contention, grace at once establishes the kingdom of heaven within; and the will, supernaturally strengthened, begins to repeat itself, so converting acts into habits, and

bringing about self-abandonment as the predominant state of the will. Thus the soul acquires perfect confidence in God's wisdom and love, and a pure preference for Him above all things—above self, above cherished ties, above the most fascinating attractions of life. This is the triumph of faith, for it sees the invisible things to be the real things.

In this habit of self-abandonment, there is nothing against manhood, if the priest be really seeking God's help. Even in earthly affairs, men do not hesitate to commit their persons and most precious interests into the hands of other men. Duplicity and fraud do not put a quietus upon credit; men will still trust each other. It is intolerable the timidity souls show about committing themselves into the keeping of the only Truth, the only Love, the only Strength, as though He were deficient in wisdom or trustworthiness, or as though it would be to Him a pleasure to dishonor the faith of His children.

Nor is this entire abandonment either repugnant to the reason or debilitating to the will of the holy priest.

It does not work contrary to personality, but rather ennobles and invigorates it. Nor is it the death of the will, except as to its independent action, but it endows it with the life which it originally enjoyed, and restores it to that relation of union with God which its independent action severed. By no means does it end probation, but it increases the chances of final victory. It is not irrevocable—sin may at any moment repeal the solemn vow. It does not justify any relaxation of other spiritual duties nor exempt from the conflicts of the Christian life. It is not the subtle arcanum of some mysterious cult. In its essence, nothing could be more simple, for it means no more than this, “I wish nothing but what God wishes; my will is dead.”

Self-abandonment into the keeping hands of God is the highest act of homage which a creature can pay to his Creator. It is the perfection of human worship. It is the nearest approach man can make to the adoration of the angels.

It is simple obedience to the command, “My son, give Me thine heart.”

What virtue could be more perfect an imita-

tion of our Lord? It is the repetition of His Own act and words, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

By its very nature it is inconsistent with reservations. The holy priest cannot keep back part of the price, unless he wishes to vitiate the whole surrender. God will not accept the half of a throne.

The soul which has acquired this habit of submission makes nothing of the possible consequences. When he hands over his will to God, whose care is so paternal, whose consolations are as sweet as His disciplines are severe, he awaits with calm mind whatever God may ordain. In the surrender, he has made no terms, has asked no concessions, and now, if God wisely send trials and evils for the soul's profit, he takes what befalls him, as content with darkness as with light. It will sometimes be hard, very hard, to drink the bitter cup. It will appear as if no strength were left, and as if the will must succumb through the weakness of the flesh, but the tried heart remembers Gethsemane, and says the prayer that was offered there, "Father, if it be possible, let this

cup pass from me; nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."

Finally, this submission forbids a return to natural activity—that is, to independency upon God in the use of the powers of body, mind, and spirit. There is always a hidden force of treason in the heart seeking to win him over to the old renounced Adamic methods and miseries, and inviting him to act in his own strength; but he has learned that his strength is weakness and that a reversion to nature's resources can only involve him in misery and unrest. "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements?" For misery and unrest are the only reward with which nature can crown the treason of the soul.

V.—HUMILITY.

It is evident from what has gone before that humility must be the foundation of every virtue and the real strength of a priest who would discharge the obligation of holiness.

"The world," that is, the great community

of natural men, look at this enviable attainment with contempt, or, if they affect to speak in its praise, it is only as blind bards sing of the stars. Really, they do not love it, for they do not practise it; and how can they, without sacrificing their pride and conceit? Not practising it, they do not understand it. They cannot comprehend how a man can honestly deem himself entitled to a seat in "the lowest room;" how he can form the habit of esteeming all others better than himself; how he can look up to the most sinful and learn something from the very outcasts; how he can see nothing in them, according to their circumstances and opportunities, worse than he can see in himself, according to his. Judging one's self in the order of nature, humility seems to be unreasonable, strained, unmanlike. But, judging according to the order of grace, in which God takes the place which nature denies Him, and man renounces the place which nature usurps, humility is the very queen of graces.

The holy priest dwelling much in the presence of God, which is the true school of humility, has learned a great lesson; he has learned that

humility is to pride as "Hyperion to a satyr," and that humility is beautiful because it is true—that is, it sees and feels the state of man to be literally what it appears to be to the infallible Eye.

Humility may almost be said to be God's favorite among the virtues. How abundant are His appreciations of its beauty! And why does He admire humility? Because He abhors un reality, and humility is the opposite of pride, pride being the very essence of falseness, since it misrepresents the state of man as God sees him. All pride is of the nature of an overvaluation of one's self—it seeks to make us pass for a thousand times more than we are worth, an exaggeration without reason or justice. Vain-glory is an excessive desire to be praised and esteemed of others; covetousness is a greed of gaining more than self needs; lust is a desire for sinful self-gratification; anger is self's passionate resentment; gluttony is unrestricted self-indulgence; sloth is selfish fondness for inactivity—and the end of all these is death. Let unbridled egoism have its way, and no room is left for God, nor has God any place for it save its own place. But

a man's value is according to his humility. It is his humility which acknowledges that we are what we are, and that He is what He is, that He is All in all, and we as nothing before Him. Humility is truth.

Humility, more than any other spiritual virtue, brings with it the blessing of inward peace. The soul that no longer staggers under the burden of self-love walks softly before the Lord, and instinctively rises above vicissitudes. His is the serenity of pure faith, and all things work for his good. He is content to accept reverses, for he gets nothing that he has not deserved; whatever advancement comes to him is the gratuitous gift of mercy; and there is nothing that men know by the name of trouble so strong as to banish the quietness and confidence of his heart.

There is no mystery here. The reason why things ruffle, annoy, and anger, is not because others are hostile or unreasonable or mean or false, in word or deed, but because the nerve of pride is painfully sensitive to the least touch. But humility accepts every offence or injury without irritation, seeing it to be a just penalty

for sin, and rejoicing in it as an occasion by which it can attest its love for God. The very peace of God rules in such a heart. The proud are "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." Of humility it may be said, "Behold, I will extend to her peace like a river."

VI.—WALKING IN THE STEPS OF CHRIST.

By humility, more than by any other grace, the holy priest walks in the blessed steps of his Master. "Learn of Me," said the Lord, "for I am meek and lowly of heart." Again, He said, "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Which words, reflecting the very mind of heaven, set forth three points of utmost value.

1. Our Lord does not condemn inequalities of condition or position, for there are necessary distinctions in the spheres of domestic, civil, and religious life; nor does He frown upon an honorable ambition to quit one's self well in the fields

of earthly effort. Spiritual lowliness is entirely practicable in the highest ranks of culture, wealth, or station. But our Lord does not regard any condition, high or low, as of intrinsic value irrespective of the possession of a humble spirit. The test of greatness, from His point of view, is a glad recognition of the fact that all men are equal as to the claims of charity, and that the law of brotherhood is universal which says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ," in the spirit of unselfish and self-forgetful regard for their interests, without pride, vain-glory, or hypocrisy. No man is truly great who is not the servant of his kind through love. Pride makes pigmies of the mightiest.

2. Our Lord is the exemplification of His law. Feeling within Himself the immeasurable force and joy of a meek and lowly heart, He would grave it on our minds that He, who is "the Son of man," the flower of humanity, the perfect expression of the Divine ideal of man, the incarnate Word who knew no sin, "dissolved, as it were, His greatness to reduce it to the form and figure of our littleness;" and took upon Him the form of a servant. *He* did that!

3. His exemplification of humility was to the intent that we might follow it, though in truth we can follow it only afar off. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you."

It is, then, by humility chiefly that the holy priest can reproduce Christ in the world. He girds himself with the same towel which Jesus wore when He washed the disciples' feet. When pleasure tempts him to shirk or neglect duty, he remembers that "even Christ pleased not Himself." In the hour of unjust accusation, he thinks of whom it was written, "The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on Me." How holy is his opportunity to come into near fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, to bear the cross, to welcome privation, to make nothing of the penalties of not conforming to the world, to renounce every thing that would impede his work and labor of love, and never to regret his sacrifices! Who can

describe the satisfaction that must flow from these close imitations of Christ, sharing with Him His views of life and His method of living, loving what He loved, and despising what He despised, preferring what He preferred, and honoring the Father whom He honored!

Without presuming upon his steadfastness, he strives to glow more and more with the love of his vocation, which calls on him to have the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, and although he may never have to meet the terrible opportunity so to humble himself as to "become obedient to death" for Christ's sake, he joyfully crucifies the suggestions of ambition, the sensitiveness of self-love, and the arrogance of pride. And O, the sweetness of his daily companionship with Jesus! His participation in the life of the Meek and Lowly One, how it turns impulse into serenity, and tones down asperities into gentleness! To maintain and increase his share in the humility of the Son of God, he willingly sacrifices gifts, endures disciplines, accepts buffetings, and counts his richest gain but loss if he may say of his will, It is dead! and of his life, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."

When a priest finds how substantial are the joys of humility, it is not difficult to learn to love it. Where it repels others, it attracts him. He prefers to walk in the steps of Jesus who loved to abase Himself, and who endured the cross, despising the shame of it. To love humility in the presence of his Saviour—it were hard not to love it; but he will not think the lowly lesson fully learned until he can honestly love humility in his relations with others, and increase his store of inward happiness by esteeming them to be better than himself, and by taking more pleasure in serving them than in receiving service from them.

O, that the “self-complacent intellectualism, fast losing itself in rationalism, agnosticism, and atheistic pessimism,” which infects modern thought and weakens or blights the faith of many priests, might flee the “dank tarn” of nature, rise to the pure ether of a Christ-resembling spirituality, and give to the Church the needed blessing of a priesthood that shall exemplify lowliness of spirit and the “sweet reasonableness” of broken pride and conquered self-conceit!

VII.—METHODS OF CULTIVATING HUMILITY.

As we study the life of a holy priest it becomes evident that his humility, of which he is so unconscious, came as to its human occasions by effort and conflict. Every virtue begins with infancy, and finds it a long way to manhood; but manhood can be reached only by growth, and growth by nourishment. It is necessary for nourishment (1), to think of humility as the very foundation of holiness; (2), to keep sleepless watch over self-love within; (3), to pray continually for self-abnegation; (4), to acquire a “holy hatred” of pride in all its many and insidious forms; (5), never to resent whatever may humiliate and give rebuke to conceit; (6), to take lessons from Him who was meek and lowly; (7), to train the senses, imagination, intellect, will, and memory, to perceive that in themselves they are naught and have nothing which they did not receive; (8), to love self-abasement, and to rejoice and be glad for everything which wounds or kills pride; (9), to rest in God rather than in His gifts, and to count honors, positions, esteem, praise, and expressions

of approbation, as dangerous; (10), to accept censures and criticisms without resentment or retaliation; (11), to postpone judgment upon wrong-doers until we are calm and just; (12), to examine one's self daily for lapses through pride; (13), to inflict penances whose smart shall abase the will and humiliate the heart; (14), never to rest satisfied with feeling the need of humility—to watch, fight, and pray, until *humility is felt*; (15), to practise the presence of God.

VIII.—ITS ATTENDANT BLESSINGS.

The grace of humility carries with it a train of attending blessings.

In such a priest the fires of irritability and anger are almost quenched. With self-importance, self-assertion takes its departure, and the strong and virile quality of meekness beautifies a character once disfigured by resentment. Sensitiveness allied with pride produced the vices of envy, jealousy and uncharitableness, but controlled by humility it now decorates and ennobles character. That arrogance of will which wished to domineer the world and which burst into rage if others

would not bend their knee, now puts on the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

With meekness comes modesty, a grace both of the external and the internal man, showing its lowly beauty in every word and act, in demeanor and dress, in spirit and conduct. It speaks in his countenance, and tells of sensitive regard for the rights and happiness of others. It is an atmosphere which becomes almost palpable to the senses for its purity and sweetness.

It also promotes moderation in everything. It takes many years for some to ascertain their spiritual center of gravity. Their relapses are as impetuous as their conversions. They indulge in devotional extravagance, and are always verging on despair or soaring to the third heaven. These experiences are simply the vacillations of half-subdued pride. The humble heart will not desire undue stimulation and will not need excessive restraint—its state is one of quiet equilibrium.

And hence of serenity. Holding his impetuosities in check, he rests calmly on God, for the secret of a well-contained and quiet spirit is with

them that are of an humble heart. They are not exempt from trials, distractions, and temptations, neither do they desire to be, for they know that every thing which hurts helps, if they will; and so true is this that God often sends burdens for the medicinal value of them, and the grace of quietness, the habit of keeping an even balance of soul through perfect repose upon God, comes from the right use of these burdens. The same result follows a right use of duties when they are so numerous and so pressing that they almost crush to the earth.

Humility, as a supernatural grace, prepares the way for self-effacement, or, at least, puts the soul in love with that rare quality by which self is abased and God exalted. To those who have penetrated this territory, self-conceit becomes odious, resentment and revenge despicable, and enmity criminal. Eager desire for esteem or honor changes to indifference towards human applause. Sensitiveness quivers not at criticism. Ambition finds its motive and end in the glory of God. To be forgotten of men is not a fate painful to anticipate—a bright enough future it

is to hope for a nook in eternity where the quiet spirit can join the eternal song and add one little note to its resounding music.

But the supernatural graces that flow from humility, however contemptible from pride's point of view, carry with them no loss of strength. He is much more of a man who is afraid to do wrong than is he who is afraid to do right. Proud and self-assertive persons are found at the rear when the real battle is on—spiritual warriors, “*grac’d with a sword, but worthier of a fan!*” Humility has gained its place in the soul by hard-earned victory on fierce battlefields. Its calm but strong simplicity suggests the meek heroism and fearlessness of the Lord. Indeed, it is the very spirit of Jesus infused into their hearts. “The boldness of Peter and John” after Pentecost fairly paralyzed the Sanhedrim; but they shrewdly divined its source when “they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.” And the spirit of those noble heroes survived them. In the days of persecution the white-robed army of martyrs went up to God “in flame, and ecstasy, and seraph-

song," and through all the ages holy and humble men of heart have shown heroic fidelity to truth, zeal in duty, uncompromising devotion to God, boldness of utterance, and readiness to suffer for principle.

IX.—INORDINATE AVERSION OR ATTACHMENT— INDIFFERENCE.

The holy priest is thoroughly suspicious of his preferences and prejudices. Inordinate attachment to persons and things is as objectionable as unreasonable aversion to them, and he strives to control himself by the practice of indifference, the faculty of moral equilibrium, which is humility in action, charity without bias, and not unlike the benevolence of Him who loves because Himself is love, and who makes His sun to rise, and rain to fall, on the evil as well as on the good. Indifference does not justify insensibility or unconcern—rather it regulates them; neither does it forbid that natural resolution of love into specific varieties, conjugal, parental, filial, etc., by which we are bound to exercise special qualities of affection; nor, further, does

it forbid our attachment to the state of life whereunto it hath pleased God to call us, with all its duties and pleasures, without repining over its vexations and pains. Indifference is love for persons and things and places as they are, under control of justice, without undue preference or aversion—a grace that can be acquired only by effort, and conserved only by vigilance and prayer.

If there is a duty which the priest specially enjoys or dislikes, or a person for whom he has a particular fancy or aversion, he should understand that danger is at hand. He cannot avoid admiring the good. God Himself observes that preference. But that is not the point. The dangerous preference or aversion exists by reason of something within himself, rather than of any quality of the person or thing. There appears to be an unaccountable element in it.

“I do not like thee, Doctor Fell,
The reason why I cannot tell.”

But the solution of the mystery involves inspection of himself rather than of Doctor Fell; and the search will quite certainly reveal a motive of

wounded pride, or some reason of self-love, some rash judgment, some tenacity of opinion, some rankling resentment, or some partiality of taste. No danger in these seemingly involuntary likes and dislikes? There is a world of danger that these little foxes may gnaw to death the vine of charity which should trail its beautiful way up to the heart of God.

One of the peculiar temptations of the clergy is to indulge in harsh prejudice against those who differ in points of doctrine, polity, or ritual. Often have we known men, models of kindliness in other respects, who were intolerant and unreasonable towards those not of their own party, belief, opinion, or practice. How many pages of history has bigotry written with pen dipped in blood! How has the seamless robe of Christ been rent into hundreds of fragments by the devilish fingers of separatism! It is a question whether anything more strongly impedes the religious progress of many priests than ecclesiastical prejudice, and whether any pernicious fault is more difficult to overcome. It must, therefore, be a sure sign of holiness when the *odium theologicum*

begins to hide its envenomed crest in the presence of divine charity.

It is only by sacred indifference that the priest can keep within him a just and equitable mind, recognizing every duty as honorable, not one too mean for his humility; and holding all men, and especially those whom he would otherwise hate or condemn, as brethren for whom Christ died.

To escape the penalties of any internal bias of like or dislike, the holy priest reverses the order which nature would observe, gives his preferences the effective snub, and compels himself to pay kindly homage to his antipathies, so fulfilling, though in a different sense, S. Paul's words: "What I would that do I not, but what I hate, that do I." There are, however, few victories on this field.

But it is a help to victory to avoid verbal expression of one's antipathies, and to make an act of self-contempt when one commits a breach of charity. Charity towards wrong-doers and contentment with things as they are generate a wonderful gift of silence; and reticence of expres-

sion persevered in will in due time cripple if not kill inward prejudice and discontent, provided other helps are used at the same time.

X.—PATIENCE.

The holy priest illustrates the supernatural grace of patience.

He has made a full trial of impatience. At times oppressed by his incompetency as a worker with God, he fretfully cried aloud, "Who is sufficient for these things?" He lost courage because so little fruit was visible after all his planting and training. His soul was aflame with desire for men that he might win them to prayer and self-denial, and they would not. At times he has been submerged in despair at the perversion of Christian people to old wives' fables, and vain babblings, and systems that end in sensuality; and it seemed more than he could attain to, to behold the folly and the shame of it, and yet remain like God, patient and forbearing. Indeed, he almost impugned God's long-suffering as extreme—"God hath forgotten; He hideth His face; He will never see it." Why, then, should he labor

in vain, and spend his strength for naught?

Then how little fruit he gathered from all his efforts to be patient with those around him, not alone as to religious interests, but in daily intercourse with them; and how their perversity and ingratitude tempted him to cease his efforts!

The same result followed when, in his endeavors to rise to fellowship with God, he failed to practise patience towards himself in his self-disappointments and reversions.

At length there came to him the timely monition that he did not well to be impatient. He could quite properly be angry with himself, with others, with an irresponsive church and world, for anger is sometimes justifiable. Our Lord was angry ("when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved with the hardness of their hearts, etc."), but at no time was He impatient. Righteous anger, aroused by wrong-doing, is high-minded, just, merciful. Impatience, excited by what does not please us irrespective of its moral quality, is fretful, intolerant, hasty, unreasonable. When analyzed, it is found to be nothing but the petulance of self-love.

In order to practise the patience of God, the priest trains himself to rest quietly in God, as the turbulent mob of worries and trials, torments and enmities, likes and dislikes, rushes by. God has borne with his lukewarmness, his formal prayers, his mechanical services, his ungenerous doubts, his moral cowardice, and why should he not patiently bear the faults of others? Why should he not be patient with himself? God did not expect much of him; why should he expect much of them or of himself? God can wait centuries for results; why should he be so fretful and eager?

In this, as in every exigency of his spiritual career, the priest perceives that the easiest way to acquire virtue is to study each virtue as it exists in the Divine Nature. And so he sits down quietly and thinks of God's patience.

How calm He is! on what serene heights He sits enthroned! with what infinite repose does He pour forth His incessant and universal energies! His is the *scientia visionis*, the immediate, intuitive, knowledge of all things, simultaneous, or by one act, for He is above time and space who

made both, true for He cannot err, clear for darkness and light are both alike to Him, certain because infinite knowledge can neither doubt nor hesitate; and yet how calm He is! It is inexpressibly wonderful. Over the face of the earth, at this very moment, millions are doing evil, speaking evil, devising evil. Think of this and then reflect that the Infinite One is witness of the whole; and that since sin entered into the world, not one moment has passed, in which He has not seen every action, and heard every word, and been privy to every thought, every desire, every feeling. Why does He not break up the great deep to roll a second deluge over the guilty race? Why but for His long-suffering patience? Why but that "He sitteth between the Cherubin, be the earth never so unquiet," and with awful serenity purposeth by successive æons of inexhaustible forbearance to defer judgment until mercy's mission is accomplished?

XI.—PRIESTLY JOY.

The holy priest is the happy priest. In accepting the entire consecration of His children, God loves a cheerful giver.

Joy is the very atmosphere of the universe. When God laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy. When He laid the foundations of the Church, the angels sang, *Gloria in excelsis Domino!*

Joy is one of the Divine attributes. He is the blessed (*μακάριος*=happy) and only potentate. He is without measure happy in Himself and because of Himself, for in Himself are infinite well-springs of joy. He cannot suffer for lack of anything which Himself cannot supply. He is all in all to Himself.

On the side of His relations to sinful man, there is a biblical representation of grief, repentance, and other limitations, but these expressions are intended to influence us through the imagination rather than to suggest any diminution of His unclouded beatitude. "Before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal"—this is the symbol of that self-sufficiency and serene joy of God which S. John beheld from Patmos.

There is too little joy in the religious life of the priesthood. Celt and Saxon priests are defi-

cient herein. Of other races, it is affirmed that they are models of cheerfulness, and more merry than melancholy. Of one who had great temptations and victories, it is written that his face was so joyous that it inspired with joy those who looked upon it. Of another it was said, "he was always cheerful and the center of cheerfulness to others." Another said, "there is one method of warding off all harm; it is to have the spiritual joy of a soul that is always thinking of God." Another has said: "No one is so amiable in the ordinary intercourse of life as a really devout man. He is simple, straightforward, open as the day, unpretentious, gentle, solid, and true; his conversation is pleasing and interesting; he can enter into all amusements; and he carries his condescending kindness and charity as far as possible, short of what is wrong. Whatever some persons may say, true devotion is never a melancholy thing, either for itself or for others. How should the man who continually enjoys the truest happiness, the only happiness, be ever sad? It is the inordinate passions of human nature which are sad—avarice, ambition, love which is not

sanctified by God and has not God for its chief end. And it is to divert themselves from the trouble and uneasiness which these passions cause the heart that men plunge themselves recklessly into pleasures and excesses, which they vary continually, but which weary the soul, without ever satisfying it." Or, it might be added, it is often a strained and puritanic conscience which produces the morbid melancholy so common among Christians.

This joy is not inconsistent with the sorrows of compunction. It is our duty to repent with broken hearts, to meditate with tears upon the Passion, to share the pang of the Holy Mother at the Cross. Such sorrows belong to the sacred category of which our Lord said, "Blessed are they that mourn." Such pains are akin to joy.

Joy is the legitimate result of a habitual surrender of the will to the good pleasure of God as it is represented by each and every event. Self-abandonment is in its essence the defeat of all enemies and the transfiguration of every form of sorrow. Burdens cast upon the Lord have no weight for man when his will is dead. All

things as they come and go are the expression of divine wisdom, and this is the reason why this is the best possible world in which to prepare for a better. There is no room for sadness, but rather all room for good cheer and exulting joy when one is perfectly sure that all things are working together for his good, and that the true significance of every day's history is that wisdom and goodness are educating him for larger opportunities and nobler planes of being. Well may such an one be always singing. Well may he bless God for everything, so that even sin (for which alone God is not responsible save to control and overrule it), may well merge its *miserere mei* into *O, felix culpa!* and the conquered soul, subjugated to the dear will of God, may find joy in all things that happen.

PRAYER.

In the broadest and deepest sense of the word, prayer is the communion of the soul with God—the greatest of all the graces, save charity. Charity is the mainspring of prayer; and prayer may be simply love loving, without word, form,

or attitude. No word, form, or attitude has any merit unless it be begun, continued, and ended in the love of God. There are different degrees of prayer, as there are different attainments in love; nor does the Hearer of prayer require all to rise to the seraphic height; but there is one thing which He does solemnly demand, and that is—reality.

Reality is peculiarly essential to the higher walks of prayer. These are attainable only at the price of much mortification, especially of the interior kind—a task of greatest difficulty, for it is easier to subdue sensuality than pride. But it is not an inconsiderable task to acquire and maintain the lowest degree of prayer, because nowhere is there a dispensation from reality. Prayer is such only when it is sincere, childlike, honest, real; but thinking it to be real does not make it so—the reality must be apparent to God who does not fail to honor it when He sees it. Therefore, the devout priest spends much time and strength in cultivating genuine relations with his Lord, and when his efforts are disappointing, as they must often be, he turns his back on the

temptation to discouragement, and keeps on doing his best.

The essence of prayer, which is the abiding perception of the presence of the Father and filial communion with Him, does not diminish the need of vocal expression, or of acts of intercession and specific petition, but rather increases the desire to use them. What a beautiful scene of triumphant faith was the martyrdom of the deacon S. Stephen, a man "full of the Holy Ghost." After he had commended his spirit to the Lord Jesus, he knelt down amidst the cruel shower of stones, and interceded for his murderers, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" And then he fell asleep. How much all the ages, how much you and I, owe to that prayer; for "*si Stephanus non orasset ecclesia Paulum non haberet!*" Intercessions, petitions, supplications, wrēstlings, must not be disused. When these are laid aside, one should suspect the flight of the spirit of prayer rather than the acquisition of some high-flown gift of prayer.

Still, with the progress of the soul out of the elementary stages of prayer, for prayer is a

development, there comes a change. Manuals are less valued, and complicated methods become useless or hindering. Mere vocal prayer, which we are taught to regard as an advance upon prayerlessness, he cannot consider as for him anything less than a mockery. The peculiar features of this maturity in prayer are: (1), its intense reality; and (2), its simplicity, or singleness of heart. Happy, thrice happy, the priest who can at length be to God as a little child indeed! It is much more to him than happiness—it is immeasurable strength—it is a foregleam of the glory of final perfection of character in heaven. To God more precious than the most elaborate devotions is the prayer of the childlike, which, often without words, rests its whole self on His bosom.

The Trials of Sanctity.

CHAPTER IV.

The Trials of Sanctity.

THE Christian life is "exceedingly tossed with tempests." Not yet has dawned the "morning without clouds." All life is swept by storms, but he who possesses that secret of transmutation which is whispered in his ear at the foot of Calvary enjoys peace when others are reduced to despair. It is the storm which makes a sailor. Especially for him who is seeking all the possibilities of grace are troubles healthful, regenerative, and sanctifying. Whether internal or external, they constitute a training-school of the will. This is God's way of lifting the curse and causing it to minister life, power, and purity. Have you never noticed the autumn wind as it beat on the soft, downy crest of the nettle, with its cluster of winged seeds? Cruel wind, why do you scatter the little family of beautiful creatures? The remorseless wind answers not—it smites. But look! those fairy wings, separated by the blast, make their way everywhere, and thus fulfil the purpose of their existence, bearing new life with them wherever they go.

I.—THREE WAYS OF TAKING TROUBLE.

THERE are three ways in which men, exercising their free wills, may take troubles.

1. As something that happens which they would not have to happen, against which they

murmur and rebel, hardening their hearts against God. Here the will asserts itself vindictively.

2. As something that happens which they would not have to happen, but which they accept with submission because it is inevitable. In this case the will surrenders helplessly.

3. As something that happens which they wish to have happen because they are firmly convinced that it reveals, or only half conceals, a real good. And here the will concurs generously and gladly.

Any one will confess that this is the nobler way, but it is also the most difficult. The holy priest, however, did not shrink from the cost, but pressed on until he learned the meaning of what was once to him the mystery of S. Paul's words, "we glory in tribulations." You and I have not soared so high as that, and it is hard to think of it as real; but we are painting the portrait of another of whom it may be affirmed that he has acquired the secret wisdom of sorrow, and does honestly regard troubles as blessings.

A blessing is the bestowment of something which makes for the welfare or happiness of the

object of divine favor. All trouble comes by divine order or permission, and is, as to the purpose of God, intended to work out a good, nor can anything cause it to miscarry save the manner of reception it gets from us. He who takes troubles in the spirit in which they are sent finds them to be blessings. He may not be able to perceive at once how the transformation takes place, but it is far better to trust God in the storm than to miss the blessing. He would rather rest on God's bare word, on His general promise, than presume to interpret His providences unfavorably for no other reason than that they involved him in some little present pain, or discomfort, or loss. Neither may he be discouraged if he feel some twinges of pain. When pain is transformed into a blessing, it does not cease to be pain. He could not bear trouble, should it cease to be trouble. It is the bearing of it with courage and serenity which proves the perfect trust of a triumphant soul. God's help in trouble is not an opiate, but a tonic.

The holy priest, therefore, banishes from his heart every kind of anxiety and solicitude, present

or prospective. He is not afraid of evil tidings, nor is his calm soul unbalanced by sudden blows. The trials of his love do not diminish charity, nor can doubts shake his faith. Whether there be tempest or sunny depths of blue, he looks up to the sky, and is not afraid. Knowing as he does that the Captain of his salvation was in a sense made perfect through suffering, and that the portion of the Church which has reached its final destination in the full perfection and beauty of confirmed holiness came out of great tribulation and made white their robes in the blood of the Lamb, he is quite content to traverse as they did the path of sorrow, in the hope that he may share with them the blessedness of perfect sanctity.

We have great need to learn this lesson of pain's mystery. But how we shrink from the costly and burdensome process! Our wills are paralyzed by self-indulgence, and we do not like spiritual exertion. We are quite willing to substitute in its place any amount of outward work, if we may be excused from the conflicts of the soul with self. The atmosphere we breathe is

charged with sentiment, emotion, zeal, and self-worship, the very opposite of the religion of self-denial, and hence much of the current Christianity has lost the sign of the cross altogether. Many do not know what a cross is. They speak of their ordinary trials, reverses, disappointments, failures, as such, but sadly wide of the mark is their judgment. To find the true cross, they must renounce their own wills through preference for God's; they must do what God commands, though obedience be distasteful, and surrender what He forbids, though its possession be to them a surpassing pleasure. A little experimenting will show them what a cross is, for experience is the school in which the doctrine of the cross is taught, and there only can the will be trained to say, Thy will be done, on the distinct basis of belief that pain sent by God is better than pleasure secured through self-will.

It is, then, not only the ordinary troubles of life which, rightly accepted, sanctify the soul, but those which come through voluntary opposition to favorite impulses and desires, to attractive though evil tendencies and passions. The Christian who

would pluck the palatable fruit of trouble must not wait for something grievous to happen; let him make his own crosses, and then let him take them up and follow Christ. When that kind of cross-bearing reaches its perfect results, there are no crosses to bear; they have become crowns. Such a life may have many ordinary sorrows, many pains and afflictions, but it has no cross.

Can as much be said for those who will not take up Christ's cross daily? All men have their sorrows, their pains, their despairs, and none can escape the common lot. What is the meaning of all this daily record of sobbing voices, of broken hearts, and early graves? What does the sad catalogue of suicides testify? What makes the end, with its presumed "surcease of sorrow," so longed for by thousands of fagged out and hopeless souls? Have all these sought the school of Christ and failed to find there the blessed secret of how to glory in tribulation?

II.—ENMITY AND PERSECUTION.

The holy priest has many trials from the enmity of others. He has to come into relation

with unreasonable men, with gossips and meddlers, with the envious and the thankless, and with traitors, for in every company of twelve there will be one Judas. His efforts to do good will be criticised and opposed, while the very simplicity and quietness of his ways will be misinterpreted, his humility pointed at as indifference, his reserve as pride, his charity as weakness, his forbearance as pusillanimity, and his unselfishness as a lack of thrift. Men who are quite willing to acknowledge the beauty of theoretical holiness do not make speed to admire its exemplification. Virtue in the concrete is never above their criticism. Because it is not perfect, they suspect it of hypocrisy. Because they do not share its motives or understand its aims, they doubt its reality. Its primary note, that life is gained by losing it and that self-spoliation brings great riches, is, from the point of view of their self-love, wholly unintelligible; and this is precisely the difference between him and them—they do not or will not, and he does understand that the more a man gives the more he receives, or, as it is worded by Thomas à Kempis, “forsake all and thou shalt find all.”

He that would be strong and pure unto God must also beware of the enmity of the world when it takes the form of friendship, for the friendship of the world is enmity to God. By "the world" is understood whatever in human society, as to use or abuse, omission or commission, active or passive opposition, arrays itself against the will of God and is out of sympathy with positive religion. Men who are governed by their animal propensities or their temporal aims, exclusively, are the natural foes of those who are trying to live for God and eternity, but their hostility is frequently concealed under a garb of good-will. The world is quick to compromise with religion on a basis of mutual concession. If devout men will tone down their scruples, the world will not only refrain from censure, but will smile its sweetest approval, will hold in honor those who concede its claim or at least tacitly acknowledge its attractions, and will even assume the outward semblances of religion, if the other party will only adjust conscience to its equivocal standards. It is a right and laudable ambition for a priest to seek the good will of good men, and he would

prove recreant to his mission did he not commend himself to every man's conscience, in the sight of God, "that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say." But false to Christ is he who lets the lure of the world's praise entice him, and who, for the paltry gain of its plaudits, for "popularity's" sake, abates the austerity of his devotion to God and to the brightest ideals of character.

The antagonism and false friendship of the world are to be looked for, but one of the sorest of his trials comes to the holy priest when he has to acknowledge that he has tasted the bitterness of the Psalmist's cup, "Yea, mine own familiar friend whom I trusted, who did also eat of my bread, hath laid great wait for me." Wounded in the house of his friends, he feels the fierce tempter's presence in his soul and almost rebels at the shame and disappointment. Could he not have been spared this blow? Must he make no moan while thus smitten and bruised? Must he live despoiled of human sympathy, and shut up to solitude? The conflict in his soul brings peace at length, for it comes to him as a new revela-

tion, what he had for the time strangely forgotten, that he who proposes to exhaust present possibilities of holiness does engage himself to live for God Alone. It is not wise to trust too implicitly in human love and friendship, not too fondly in the loves that never fail him and shall never die, nor too strongly in the wisdom of the noblest, if he would make God his All. Let him nevermore forget that the religion of God Alone is the religion of the cross, upon which everything which claims precedence of the love of God must be crucified. Thus only can he bear the shocks of the heart when friends fail; thus only enter into fellowship with Him who said to His disciples in Gethsemane, "What! could ye not watch with Me one hour?"

It is by such experiences that he learns to be indifferent to the enmity of the world and the defection of false or weak brethren, and to be joyful in the friendship of heaven, persuaded that they which are for him are more than they which are against him; and that the ever-faithful love of God will cause things grievous and sore to bear to speed him in his pursuit of perfection,

provided he stand the test of faith which is involved in the honest acceptance of tribulations as blessings, and provided he renounce the delusive dream that when one surrenders wholly to God he thereby ensures for himself certain exemption from vexations and misfortunes. Instead of murmuring at enmities, he will learn to hail them as badges of discipleship, according to the word of our Lord, as S. Mark reports it: "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, *with persecutions*, and in the world to come life everlasting."

III.—THE TEMPORAL PENALTIES OF SIN.

But in taking refuge in God from the misrepresentations of enemies and the unfaithfulness of friends, he finds good reasons for doing so in the philosophy of the situation. Thus, having learned how little God expects of him (for in sooth he has very little to give), he expects little

of others. He is not surprised or chagrined to find that he must endure the injustice of being adjudged to be what he is not or to have said or done what he neither did nor said. Has he lived all these years, and not learned that human nature, which never superabounds in charity, is seldom deficient in harsh judgments of others? No man is a hero to his valet, the proverb goes; and yet a hero he may be, and the valet only another of the common herd of detractors.

It is at first blush a grievous thing to be painted in false colors and condemned for offences which exist only in the imagination of the malicious, and measures of self-defence suggest themselves. Nature is ever ready to give a Roland for an Oliver. But a holy priest will repress natural indignation and take a little time for silence and consideration.

1. He will reflect that passing criticisms, however misrepresenting they may be, have little power to hurt, and soon pass into silence, like the wailing winds of yesterday. They cannot violate his soul's interior peace. They could harm him only were he to decline to use them as means of gaining closer fellowship with God.

2. Perhaps the injustice would be more biting did he not know how superficially he knows himself, and that, possibly, these misrepresentations after all really represent (while they may exaggerate) serious defects of his. Or, granting the judgment to be baseless, a venture of malice, false and unjust, still the priest will not jeopardize humility by indignant protests, but will prefer to moderate his feelings and consider how justly and severely he might be criticised for other faults of which he could confess himself to be guilty.

3. It may be revealed to him that his own breaches of the law of charity deserve that the sinfulness of them experience a penalty after their kind. He is only getting what he has given.

4. He will not neglect to consider that harsh judgments and censorious criticisms give him a fine field for the exercise of the opposite virtues of charity and patience. Now is his opportunity to answer back the reviler with gentleness and mercy, and bless through grace whom he would have cursed by nature. Purest of the prayers which reach God is that which prays for enemies,

and the holy priest will testify how sweet is the peace with which God rewards such a prayer.

5. He knows also that disciplines are never more wholesome than when one can say, "they hated me without a cause." He gets very near to the cross who suffers innocently the penalties due to the guilty. The bitterest waters are turned to sweet when he drinks, even if it be only a drop, from the chalice which his dear Lord drained to the dregs. By such lessons the holy priest is instructed how to find a real joy in contumely and detraction, and to covet pain as one of the higher forms of blessing. Thus he is trained to enter into such keen fellowship with the sufferings of Christ that, like S. Paul, he can "glory in tribulation."

These considerations well taken leave little margin for further action. For the vindication of God's honor, there may in rare cases be a duty of self-defence, but ordinarily the priest's strength is to sit still, and remember his Lord how He "made Himself of no reputation," and was all the stronger and nobler for setting His face to His work with heroic self-forgetfulness,

indifferent to the misjudgments and misrepresentations of men.

IV.—MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND MISREPRESENTATIONS.

The holy priest willingly accepts the temporal penalties of his sins. If he believed that the divine forgiveness which crowns the contrite heart did at the same moment absolve him from the natural results of sin, it would be impossible to account for the pains which he still suffers as consequences of former wrongdoing. For who can deny that the penalty manifests itself as well in the physical as in the moral nature? As our returning soldiers have Santiago graven on their bodies and limbs in wounds and scars, so do we all bear the marks of former sins. As Job said, "thou writest bitter things against me; thou makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." Early contempt of the law of purity has often resulted in years of suffering, and excessive indulgence in other appetites, has dug many an early grave. The mind often suffers greater damage than the body, nor can the soul escape the tem-

poral pains of its sins. The old customs of self-love and self-assertion, the old preference for self-will, the old ways of disobedience, indifference, and irreverence—all these have become crystallized into habit and exercise a terrible retarding influence upon one who is at length turning to God and trying to be what he has so long refused to be.

It is the surviving effect of former sins which makes such mixed quantities of his contrition, his love, his obedience, and his hope, distracts his mind in prayer, and often drives him to the brink of despair.

There is no escape from the temporal penalties; but the holy priest has learned to bear his by considering that he deserves them. He bears them with a humiliated heart, and offers them to God in union with the passion of Christ. They would be more severe if they were the full measure of his desert. Borne meekly, they promote holiness, and please God.

V.—TEMPTATIONS.

In his contact with temptation the holy priest practises wisdom, the result of experience, and

is thereby forearmed against every insidious foe.

He has seen enough of human nature to know that great advantages accrue to him who falls in with the seductions of temptation. What is called "the world" has power to make itself very attractive. Its cup is sweet to the taste, its viands are most palatable, its music is enchanting, its pleasures are captivating. It appears to be profitable to a man to enjoy the favor of the world, and all the more profitable if he can gain the whole world. He sees no profit in refusing to do what gives him pleasure, no inherent attraction in the denial of his inclinations; and who indeed does? Self-denial has no charm unless one prefers the fruits of it to the results of unregulated self-indulgence. The man of the world counts it a very great profit to be able to gratify every taste, to indulge every appetite, and to propitiate every fancy. It sounds to him like folly to say that sin is so horrible a thing, because *he* finds that it is fascinating. It ministers pleasure, it promises rewards and keeps its promises, it sends its agents to watch the conscience and buy it off from adverse legislation, and it pays large

sums for the service. There is an immense output of pleasure on sin's account. Do you suppose that men would do what God has forbidden if it did not seem to them to pay to do it?

In one word temptation, when one yields to it, accompanies its victory with rewards. That these are evanescent, and that there ensues a secondary result which is crushing and terrible, is to such an one the prattle of nervous people. Nevertheless, afterwards sin reveals its true nature, the world loses its glamor, the electric current of pleasure is turned off, and pah! there is a smell of corruption and graves.

Two things are involved in the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil. First, that man has a capacity of being deceived. In other words, we can be made to think that right is wrong, and wrong right. "I verily thought that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus," said S. Paul. No maniac could more implicitly accept his hallucination than do men sincerely justify, at least in the overt act, their infractions of the law of God. And men, so easily deceived, are followed by hosts of deceivers—the fascinat-

ing but false world, the treacherous and insatiate flesh, the devil who goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, all purposing to hypnotize their consciences and make them think "broken cisterns that can hold no water" to be "the fountain of living waters."

Admitting the fascination of sin, the imperial power of it, the splendor of its court, the generosity of its almoners, the priest knows in his soul that it can fill the air with its music and flaunt its carnival banners only for a season, for the world passeth away and the lust thereof. They who yield to temptations must at the last feed on ashes. Their final reward is the paralysis of powers that have exhausted themselves upon disappointing objects, the deep dejection of a heart that has tried to live without God and now has nothing to lean upon but the harrowing memory of a misspent life, the craving thirst of a soul that perishes on the desert where no waters be. The old attractions are only creeping things to sting and slime the soul, and death is nigh.

From that ghastly finality the good priest shrinks by shrinking from temptations. No one

is so assaulted as he who tries to lead an interior life—no one so assailed by doubts, by scruples, by passions, by discouragements, by resuscitations of the old Adam; but he who desires to reach the final triumph, will not show the white feather on any field, be the foe never so fierce. He resists, for he believes that temptations vanquished “are the raw material of glory.” He spurns their false glare, knowing that he who doeth the will of God shall live in the light of an eternal day.

The Helps of Sanctity.

CHAPTER V.

The Helps of Sanctity.

ACCORDING to apostolic computation, present trials bear the relation to future rewards of a moment to eternity. S. Paul also gives us the truth that our troubles work for us (*κατεργάζεται*=produce as a final result) “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” They are, therefore, most efficient as helpers forward in the paths of holiness. But how many other advantages are on the side of him who resolves to aim at the end of his vocation! “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.”

I.—THE MEANS OF GRACE.

THE obligation of “perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord” inspires the holy priest with courage to resist everything which would hinder his progress, viewing it as an enemy to be watched and fought down with contemptuous indignation; and the same obligation leads him to get all that can be got out of the means and methods by which the soul may gain the blessed end it aims at.

As to hindrances, their name is legion, but he recognizes them only to take up arms against them. He refuses with righteous contempt to succumb to the artifice of concealing a cold heart and wordly mind under the mask of devotion. He resists the attempts of the old life to hold him back—a stern task, for a man is not only what he is, but what he has been; he sets his face like a flint against the propensity to excess in the use of things allowable; he despises the crafty inclination of his nature towards a mediocre standard of attainment, and with like contempt does he confess, while he resists, the temptation to professionalism; above all, he institutes lynx-eyed vigilance over himself, in the center of his soul, lest, through excess of self-love, he commit mortal sin.

As to helps, the Holy Ghost exhibits His gracious aid by objective means, as the sacraments of the Church, alms, prayer, fasting; and by subjective means, as faith, hope, charity, contrition, humility, self-denial. He fills the sacraments with the graces which they signify and convey, and blesses the right use of all external helps;

while by the internal helps He educes the proper dispositions for the reception of grace and blessing.

The priest who hungers for grace will, therefore, seek it by the help of its vehicles; and everything depends upon the spirit in which he uses them. He must be earnest, constant, cautious, assiduous, diligent.

As in agriculture the plow-man must "open and break the clods of his ground," and "cast in the wheat and the barley and the rye in their place," and as the rain which cometh down from heaven and watereth the earth, giveth seed to the sower, so in religion it is the diligent soul that shall be made fat. And as the Lord of the natural forces lends His co-operation to man, going forth unto his work until the evening, so the Spirit of holiness worketh with and within those who address themselves assiduously to the God-pleasing cultivation of the interior life. We can do nothing without God; He will do nothing without us.

But the holy priest, while he avoids the wrong use of them, feels no timidity in the use of the

external means. Because it is possible for hypocrisy to make them "a savour of death," they do not cease to be to him "a sweet savour of Christ." He might as well renounce the Scriptures because some wrest them "to their own destruction." He honors means because they are divinely appointed, or are approved by long use in the Church; because our Lord sanctified many of them by His own use of them; because they are appropriate to their end; because they have ever been blessed of God, and tenderly loved by His best servants.

Spiritual exercises prosecuted without the aid of the sacramental economy which makes the New Law more glorious than the Old, produce a type of devotion which, however sincere, is very uneven. Many current errors had their rise in the idea that *media* are superfluous, because the soul's access to God is direct. This modern form of mysticism has much to do with certain unwholesome religious developments, at this time; but it has no lineal connection with true mysticism. There is for those who find it an experience of a Being who is higher than means, who rises above our most exalted conceptions, "the Unknown

God" in the sense that His fulness cannot be comprehended by thought or analogy, by reason or image; but in order to begin to apprehend this Being it was necessary to have and maintain instrumental help; and this the mystics of the historic Church have always taught with scarcely an exception, not even Molinos and Tauler. It was through the sacraments as through gates that open upon infinity that they emerged into the "awful dark" of Pure Godhood. Especially was it the incarnation which ushered them into that region of the incomprehensible. Jesus Christ was the light which shined "out of darkness," and by His light they soared upward to the limit of finite flight, until they reached the darkness from which He came forth. Now, since the incarnation was so necessary to them to secure what knowledge they had and to discover how much they could never know, we may assure ourselves that all the means and sacraments of the Church and the Church itself are of similar value, and as indispensable to the perfection of Christian character as the incarnation; for what are they but the products and virtual perpetuation of the incarna-

tion? Whenever the sacraments are lightly esteemed, an Arian tendency will develop sooner or later, and the type of holiness which flows from the Incarnate Word will be supplanted by some form of naturalistic morality, or by a Christless mysticism.

At the same time the priest recognizes the possibility of the wrong use of helps. There is often present in the heart a persistent temptation to use means as if they were an end, and to lavish upon them the devotion which belongs to God. The fervor with which the sacraments are administered may survive the motives of spiritual loyalty, and the self-deceived heart may keep up an appearance of earnestness which is as mechanical as the movements of the body. Outward observances are vainly instrumental unless there is in them the union of the soul with God by "charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Nevertheless, the greater hazards attend the sin of depreciation. For he that makes little of them expects little from them, and is given little; while he who puts much emphasis on them is in intimate contact with the very means by whose

spiritual virtue only, he can be taught the law of sacramental perspective. A little table will always be only a little table to the mind prejudiced against the unbloody sacrifice; but the priest who stands at an altar gloriously bedecked will be borne onward by the beauty of things seen, to the antitypical splendor of things symbolized.

II.—SENSIBLE DEVOTION.

In his use of means the holy priest will have learned that all approaches to God are primarily acts of the will influenced by prevenient motives. The action of the will does not depend as to its integrity upon the excitation of the emotions, although the latter may and often does follow that action. Therefore he will not be disturbed by the absence of sensible devotion. He who truly loves God is quite willing to serve Him without reward, if such be the will of God.

He has no reason to depreciate the religious affections, but he has reasons for suspecting them as infallible tests of his spiritual condition.

1. Because it is impossible to distinguish between emotions aroused by natural causes and those produced by religious influences.

2. Because it is contrary to analogy to measure character by ebullitions of feeling.

3. Because the spiritual helps God has given operate according to the dispositions they meet in us, and very few there are whose dispositions tend to emotion in the discharge of habitual acts of duty. This is true of human as well as of Divine relations. We do not test our love for others so much by what we feel or say as by what we do—a principle which our Lord enunciated when He said, “if a man love Me, he will keep My words.”

4. Because the Holy Spirit often withdraws consolation and sweetness in order to develop the graces of naked faith and blind perseverance. In such a case the absence of sensible emotion betokens the nearer approach of the refiner of souls. He would teach the soul to prefer Him to His gifts.

It is admitted that the coldness of the feelings in prayer and in other duties of religion may proceed from sinful acts of omission or commission. Gloom and unrest and a sense of desertion are consequent upon derelictions of the will.

The thick curtain of the Father's displeasure is drawn over the windows of the soul, and He leaves it to grope in its native darkness, until the self-asserting will breaks down into contrition, and weeps itself back into the presence of absolving Love.

All strength, all safety lies in the vigilance and loyalty of the will, which should never knowingly displease the Father, and which in the twilight of discipline or the midnight of desertion, shall still strongly protest, "though He slay me yet will I trust in Him."

Then it ought to be considered that our perception of God's presence is less to be valued than our conviction that He is present. A holy writer speaks of Him as one who looks through a lattice and sees clearly, while we only have a glimpse of Him. It is a great thing to have a glimpse of the King in His beauty, but it is a greater to know that He sees us with constant vision unimpeded, knows our needs, pities our infirmities, watches over our lives and even opens the lattice a little wider, as the years roll on, that we may see more of Him.

III.—SOLITUDE.

The holy priest loves and finds great help in solitude, or the state of being withdrawn from society, or companionship.

Why does he love it?

Certainly not because solitude is attractive or profitable in itself. Man is a social being, and it is not good for him to be alone. Certainly not because he may happen to have an aversion to society, which would not only be selfish in him, but contrary to the nature of his mission.

He loves it because in solitude he is better able to collect or concentrate his faculties, and it is by recollection that the soul separates itself unto the fellowship of God. He withdraws from others (things as well as persons), that they may become less, and God more, to him. Many a good man, meaning to be better, has lost ground through entanglement in affairs or too much absorption in earthly duty; and even duty which is distinctly religious may be so zealously done that the mind becomes more intent upon the service than upon the Master for whom it is done.

To neutralize this weakness, he needs to repress the feeling that he ought to be busy about some external thing every moment; and then he needs to go away into silence and solitude. There the causes of distraction are not so immediate, the senses are less vivacious, and "sensations" are like "ships that pass in the night."

The holy priest loves to be alone with God because he has learned that God loves to be alone with him. "The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him." His delights are with the children of men. By an infinite and marvellous condescension, He enters the door of a receptive soul, and makes His abode there. This is that inner manifestation to the individual which our Lord promised to love and obedience, more to be desired than any earthly affection or treasure, without which it were vain to hope for abiding peace (S. John xiv. 23.)

Aloneness with God is retirement but not inactivity. The nearer the soul approaches the Ineffable Presence, the more distinctly do God's incessant activities stand revealed. Without weariness, effort, or exhaustion, He fills the uni-

verse of matter and mind with the awful outpouring of His energies, and sustains all life and movement. The necessary effect of spiritual communion with Infinite Activity is the acquisition in some measure of that union of operation and tranquillity which characterizes the nature of God.

Frequent periods of solitude with God facilitate the perception of the presence of God at all times and in all places. It is of great importance to one who would sanctify all his actions, habitually, to be able as quick as thought to fall back upon Him who compasses our path and is acquainted with all our ways. Is it strange that so many of us lead unsatisfactory lives, when we make Him as if He were in a far country to be reached only by long journeys at long intervals?

IV.—RECOLLECTION.

The holy priest will have acquired a recollected spirit only at great expense, but he knew too well the value of the grace to haggle over the cost of it.

Recollection is preceded by withdrawal and

surrender—spiritual withdrawal from all things, and surrender to the magnetism of God's presence. But how difficult! Try, if you can turn your mind away and concentrate it wholly upon God for two minutes! O, how much toil and how many disappointments await you!

Nor is this difficulty such a marvellous thing. We have only to turn to the past to find the solution. Year after year, we have been absorbed in secondary duties, or in pleasures, or in sins, or in all these, and the wild whirl of life has carried us away from steadfast waiting upon God.

Often have we refrained from prayer on frivolous pretexts. We have never put our minds into meditation with as much force as into business or studies. If we have shown pluck and perseverance, it has been on earthly lines. Now the outcome of all this has been positive mental as well as spiritual debility in approaching God, and the lack of power to gather our faculties into one focus of prayer has become a habit, a kind of second nature grown up within us, for disuse as well as use "doth breed a habit in a man." This is the task, then, to break up this habit and supplant it by the habit of recollection.

But the oratory in the breast is long in building. The foundations have to be laid in the subsoil of humility. The walls must go up in silence, and the trusses spread without the sound of hammer, and many a day will it take to paint the windows and decorate the ceilings. Often the soul will be tempted to despair of concentration, distractions will show the persistent malice of devils, and self-love will offer its dire competition with the love of God. But, after awhile, there will come a strange simplicity of rest in Him, and the serenity of heaven will nestle within the heart.

And yet, strange to say! this holy equipoise of the soul will have been acquired, not by the extinction of distractions, but by victory over them. A priest cannot literally withdraw from them, even in retreat, because they will not withdraw from him. Most priests are sent to live in the midst of a busy world, and to be about the Master's business there. What a clatter of telephones and door-bells! What showers of letters! What a caravan of visitors! What a whirl of duties! Is it possible to maintain recollection

and serenity in such an environment? Of one holy priest it is written: "There is a singular sense of repose as we dwell upon his history. The turmoil of Church politics, the manifold engrossments and occupations of his office, literary, spiritual, and administrative, never seemed to disturb the calm, steadfast bent of his soul, or that clear current of his life which swept onward, like a deep river towards the sea, straight for Paradise."

What was possible for one ought to be possible for others, and would be for all if all should accept distractions as an incidental part of their vocation. If they are permitted to occur while the priest is serving God, he must not complain, but rather rejoice; not lose patience, but rather welcome them as he would any other form of trial. He that is distracted from God by the distractions of God's service must be a weak servant indeed. But if he accept them as a matter of course, on the principle that everything that hurts helps, he may convert them into means of grace and instruments of praise. The worry of the whirl will be thereby diminished and in time

neutralized, so that under any circumstance the mind will be as self-contained and calm as a great general's on the field of battle. The telephone ceases to distract when one makes a *benedicite* of its frequent clamor—O, ye bells, bless ye the Lord, praise Him and magnify Him forever! God has given the humble heart this power to clothe everything with the garments of praise, and to compel the most perverse events to sing *Te Deum*; but it is an art to learn to do it, and one must persevere.

V.—ORDINARY ACTIONS AS MEANS OF HELP.

There are great stores of help for an earnest priest in his spiritual use of the ordinary actions of life. It has been wisely said that perfection consists not in doing extraordinary things, but in doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. Many persons associate the Divine Being only with religious ordinances, with great perils, with special needs or emergencies, as though the minor events and trivial experiences of their daily life did not fall within the jurisdiction of Him to whom nothing is great, nothing small. In

His sight, there is no such difference of dimension between a mountain and a grain of sand that He should make more of one than of the other. He is quite as present in the customary routines as in the great exigencies, and bestows His equal blessing in the one as in the other.

Behind every action, however ordinary, there is a grace awaiting its proper performance. The more strongly the will takes hold upon the relation of God to ordinary actions, the more sanctifying do these little sacraments become. Lavish, generous, unbounded confidence in Him wherever He is (and where is He not?) calls down His sweetest and strongest blessings.

The holy priest, therefore, uses the utmost fidelity in offering up his common actions to God. With a devotion as sincere as that which he feels when he offers the Holy Sacrifice, he throws his intention into everything that he does. All belongs to God, in His strength all is done, and if, by reason of the infirmity of the creature, a distinct oblation does not accompany each distinct act, he may, day by day, offer a general intention that all he may do shall be to the glory of God,

not thereby, however, excusing himself from frequent specific oblations. A pure intention is a delicate flower, easily withered, and it must be often watered.

VI.—THEY PROTECT FROM MANY FOES.

His ordinary actions being habitually associated with God, the holy priest thereby protects himself from many foes.

The constant recurrence of a particular duty * often begets repugnance. Clock-like regularity wearies, and the mind longs for a change. It is a sign of weakness to grow languid in the discharge of recognized obligations; and who is not weak? who has not felt this loss of heart and interest? who has not deplored his tepidity with many murmurs of conscience? There is no stimulus more effective than a fresh consecration of every action to God; and this is the daily habit of the faithful priest.

1. Most persons have some form of intemperance, some excessive indulgence of an appetite. He that is controlled as to drinking is likely to pass bounds as to smoking. Others curb these

indulgences only to practise intemperance at the table. An immoderate license granted any appetite is fatal to spiritual growth, and must involve the conscience in many sorrows. Probably more priests have sunk to the lowest levels of religious life for this cause than for any other; souls predestinated to reach the highest walks of sanctity wrecking their vocation for wretched sensuality's sake! O, that they had trained themselves to sanctify all their actions to God, and to offer up all their pleasures as a pure oblation! It is necessary that priests train themselves in the school of indifference, so as to deem nothing so necessary as peace of conscience, nothing too good to be given up, nothing to be desired overmuch, nothing to be sought for inordinately; for nothing save what has the stamp of heaven on it has any right to our preference. He who lives under the control of this spirit of indifference makes little of bodily ease and indulgence, because he dare not unite God with excess nor ask Him to smile upon the perversion of His gifts. He can eat and drink to the glory of God, only as, at any cost, he restrains himself within the limits of moderation.

2. He who uses the gift of speech to the glory of God insures himself against its perils. Much intercourse with God leaves the heart indisposed to overmuch talk with men. On the other hand, the garrulous tongue is fatal to self-control and stops growth in the higher virtues.

3. Nothing is more effective to neutralize outbursts of temper than the sanctification of every passion.

4. Recreation will be controlled, sensible, natural, helpful, if it is associated, by oblation, with the joy of God.

VII.—HOW TO KNOW THE WILL OF GOD.

It is the choice and joy of a holy priest always to have a mind to do or suffer the will of God without reserve or hesitation, without complaint or doubtfulness, wherever and whenever that will is made known to him. This generous abandonment of himself to the will of God relieves him from many of those vexations which fall to the lot of persons who permit self-love or self-will to sit in judgment on difficult questions of conscience.

In general terms, he believes that the will of God is expressed by everything but sin. He, therefore, turns away with horror from the conclusions of the pessimist, who sees everything branded with the mark of malevolence. Man alone is responsible for sin and its fruits; his own free will has done him this despite. But in the whole wide realm of the universe, nothing else can be or happen that is not directly or indirectly a revelation of the purposes and preferences of the Divine mind; and to crown this proposition, he believes that all things work together for good to them that love God. To have a right judgment in all things is not a mystery—it is simply to be able to discern the will of God in them.

But it is not always plain sailing on the seas of Providence. Divergent courses confront one, the right choice being beyond the sagacity of the most devout mind. Where shall he find wisdom and guidance?

1. There is inexpressible relief in spreading out before God his ignorance and uncertainty, and praying for promised light. "In Thy light shall we see light."

2. He will not hesitate to avail himself of the counsels of God's servants who have long studied God's ways and possess love and wisdom to direct others.

3. He is, moreover, quick to infer that the path of duty is most likely to be that which ministers least to self-love or the indulgence of the flesh.

4. He has another help in the honest bias of a prayerful conscience, and still another in his acceptance beforehand of any ill consequence which may be the penalty of an error of judgment, for God often makes the mistakes of men to praise Him and restrains their power to do mischief.

But the holy priest is not seriously embarrassed by the riddles of casuistry. Their solution is less difficult than obedience. He knows that it is more easy to find out the will of God than to have a glad mind and heart to do it, which is his heart's fond desire.

VIII.—LIMITS OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

If there is great help in acquiring Christian character from knowledge of one's self, there is

help also in realizing that we can never know self perfectly.

In his surrender to the keeping hands of God, the holy priest renounces the fond illusion that there are no depths and mysteries of self-love within him which are beyond his knowledge. He may have died to every evil practice of an external kind, may have attained great perfection in prayer, may have learned to love crosses and humility, may have subdued the passions of the flesh, may have acquired a taste for silence and solitude, may have grown to much conscious love for God; but over against that is the unpleasant fact that his selfhood holds in reserve, spite of his will and his wish, possibilities of assertion against God and of indulgence in sin which are sleeplessly watching for occasion to flash into action. "O, my God!" he exclaims, "I write bitter things against myself, but alas! they are true." He thought he was in charity with all men, but some little offence lashes him into a storm of anger. He was making some upward progress towards humility, and suddenly something happens and he feels within him a hard,

cold heart of pride. Passions which he trusted were dead, he discovers to have been only sleeping dogs. Quick as electricity, his tongue betrays him and he has uttered a word that was unkind and unjust. And then, O, what disappointments in himself! what midnights of remorse! what agonies of self-contempt! what temptations to despair! Most of the spiritual dereliction of priests is probably due to discouragement, resulting from the shock of disappointment at finding the malignity and persistence of evil still crouching in the most secret recesses of the heart. O, it is so terrible to seem to have labored and fought and prayed for naught! Can it be that the craving for righteousness was a dream of unattainable beauty? Has God forgotten to be gracious? or is He so solicitous as we thought Him to be that the ministry should rise above conventional standards?

Such results are sad enough, but, what is worse, they are inexcusable, because they ought to have been foreseen. The mysterious lairs of self-love should have been taken into account, and then the priest would not have been surprised at

the leap of the tiger. How could he have failed to notice the effect of praise and flattery on his self-esteem? When he heard a person praised against whom he had a prejudice, or when he did not get notice and consideration, or when another of whom he was jealous surpassed him, or when his good was evil spoken of, or when he heard that he had been "picked to pieces" by censorious critics, how did his precious little stock of presumed humility evaporate, and the cold iron heart of self-love spring up into rigorous activity! With the evil possibility in his soul's depths, deeper than the reach of his will, he should have expected it to assert itself. Surprise is only another sign of the evil, for it is the pride of one who thought himself beyond falling; whereas, if there is room for surprise, it should be that he did not fall sooner and farther.

Such surprises and disappointments flow from a wrong conception of the processes of sanctification. The experience of S. Paul has repeated itself in his brethren of all ages, and its principle lies at the very foundation of the life of holiness. No man has sought perfect conformity

with God's will more generously and diligently than he, or at greater expense. He suffered the loss of all things, and put a contemptuous value on his loss, "for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," with the aim of gaining "the righteousness which is of God by faith;" but he had acquired such knowledge of himself that he saw the risk of failure, and therefore discovered and embraced this principle of spiritual growth, "not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

The lessons of disappointment indicate this principle as one never to be forgotten, and should teach the soul not to trust to its self-knowledge, nor to be over-sanguine as to its progress, nor to presume upon its power of recuperation; but, on the contrary, to be always more actively trusting

in God by whose power alone this indwelling remainder of corruption, this deeply rooted pride and love of self, shall, after the final triumph of disciplines here and hereafter, be entirely uprooted, and Christ formed within him. O, Saviour, most watchful of souls, take us into Thy keeping, now and forever!

“Let the sweet hope that Thou art mine
My path of life attend;
Thy presence through my journey shine,
And crown my journey’s end.”

But the earnest priest will not intermit his struggles and devotions. He truly trusts in God who obeys the injunctions of God, and nothing this side of the divine help is more fundamental than that those who would be kept of God shall keep on working like beavers.

IX.—THE COUNSELS OF PERFECTION.

The holy priest appreciates the helpfulness as well of the counsels as of the precepts of Christ. All of his efforts are directed towards a literal compliance with the precepts, which are of universal obligation, and especially with the law of perfection which our Lord laid down for all of

His disciples—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." Love is the fulfilling of this law—love for God and love for mankind, love, the queen of all the virtues.

But there is another pathway to perfection, which is not another—only that there is a difference between those who seek perfection by the precepts alone and those who seek it by the precepts and the counsels. The devotee of the counsels seeks to conform himself literally to the external conditions of the earthly life of Jesus Christ as well as to His interior mind, and to this he pledges himself by a vow. He seeks perfection by the precepts, obeyed in love, *plus* the profession and practice of actual poverty, of virginal chastity in body and soul, and of implicit obedience to visible rule and authority.

Now, although the holy priest may not think himself called to this separated life, in community with others, nor, perhaps, adapted to it, he feels himself free to enter into its spirit and to practise its privileges, so far as his state of life will allow, in order that he may increase in holiness; and, moreover, to cultivate the dispositions which

would impel him to fall into it with alacrity in case Providence and Grace should concur in calling him to it—not a probable contingency, however, in these days. While it is true that his mission is in the world, he has learned the art of being in the world yet not of it, according to that prayer of the Lord, “I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”

As to the counsels of perfection:

1. He may not strip himself of every thing which he calls his own, nor renounce control of his earthly possessions, nor bind himself not to add to them or accept gifts, but he can confine himself within very narrow limits as to the use of them for his own benefit, using only what is necessary, interpreting his needs very stringently, and supplying them without enthusiasm. He may hold millions in his own name (a dubious blessing—God pity him!), but if he has risen above the deceitfulness of riches by a heroic struggle, and attained perfect detachment of spirit, for him is the blessing—“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

2. The law of charity is of universal obligation, whether it is applied to the estate of marriage, which is declared to be an honorable one if its bed be undefiled, or to the estate of celibacy, in which our Lord lived His pure and stainless life. There is no state and no duty in which any are exempt from possessing their vessels in sanctification and honor, not in the lust of concupiscence, and from knowing how to do so; for God hath not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness.

This delicate virtue must be protected at the cost of a right eye or a right hand, else will horrible judgments ensue. And the chastity of the heart must be as sternly preserved as the members must be yielded instruments of righteousness unto God; for our Lord has distinctly taught that the look of desire is in turpitude the equivalent of the overt act.

All things are unto an end, and purity will not dishonor the uses which God has appointed. But whatever may be his state, every man is bound to put an iron bit in the mouth of physical nature, and drive it often and far over the stony highways of continence. Chastity is like a lamb

among lions, and must be shielded at any cost. Sometimes it can be better befriended by flight than by battle. It must ever be kept in mind, moreover, that the senses are like dogs—they must be scourged before they will obey. He who loves chastity will love the smarts of discipline whereby the rebellions of the flesh against the spirit may be hindered. But those weak souls who resent discipline and give themselves over to excess, how can they live in the company of Jesus and His Virgin Mother? how can they be saved? what part have they in the blessing, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”?

3. Obedience in the life of those who observe the evangelical counsels is the voluntary vow of conformity with the will of another as to God. It is evident that the virtue of it lies in its voluntariness, for it would have no merit if enforced. Now, is it not practicable for a priest to practise this most necessary of virtues by freely choosing to submit himself to some visible authority? There may be a practical difficulty in finding a proper superior, but the humbled heart of a holy priest will search till he find a yoke to bear and

a will to guide and govern, of which he can say, It is not my will, but I make it mine! The sure path to implicit trust in the will of God is to take the rule of some good man's will. To him shall pertain the blessing, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

X.—SELF-MORTIFICATION—ITS NATURE.

The grace of self-abandonment produces the practical effect of self-denial. No longer his own, the holy priest refuses himself all that God has forbidden, or that his conscience condemns as wrong, or, for him, inexpedient. Mortification may, therefore, be considered as a help and means of progress.

The Christian doctrine of the death of self, however impracticable it may seem to those who are spiritually immature, is simply fundamental to the religion which Jesus Christ established and exemplified. He Himself stated its principle when He said, "except a grain of corn fall into the earth, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." What a contrast between wheat stored in an elevator and the wheat

which has been buried in the soil! In one case, "it abideth alone," and would remain as it is if it were to sleep for centuries, like the grain of Pompeii; but the wheat that dies in the earth suffers a wondrous change into "the body that shall be," and reproduces itself an hundredfold. Then our Lord comments on His illustration by adding: "He that loveth his life, shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal. If any man serve Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there shall My servant be; if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." And in another place, He says: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." The apostolic writings resound with echoes of our Saviour's words. S. Paul says to the Colossians, mortify (*νεκρώσατε*=make corpses of) your members which are upon the earth." "Ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." And to the Romans; "Reckon ye yourselves to be dead (*νεκρούς*=corpses) unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." "If ye through the Spirit do mortify

(θανατούτε=put to death) the deeds of the body (*i. e.*, the evil influence of its unregulated passions and appetites upon the soul), ye shall live." And to the Corinthians: "But I keep under my body (δουλαγωγῶ=bring it into subjection by discipline), lest that by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

This is a lesson most necessary to be brought to the front. We owe positively nothing to the old nature which we derived from Adam the first; "we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh." In surrendering to God we have cancelled all of its claims, have repudiated the old order of self-indulgence, and have sworn allegiance to the life of crucifixion. On the other hand, we owe much to the Spirit, even to live after the Spirit, and unless we are in the daily way of paying something on that debt, how shall we hope to gain the life that is found by losing it?

Mortification is the habitual denial to himself, for the love of God, of everything that one's lower nature eagerly inclines to, and the acceptance of all that nature would dislike or reject; and it

applies to small matters quite as much as to great.

It is of two kinds: (1). That which is of obligation. A Christian is a man who has put himself under bonds to die to everything which God has forbidden, everything that is in itself sinful, everything which the sanctified common-sense of the Church has condemned. (2). That which is voluntary; and this applies to things lawful, or indifferent, such as eating, drinking, sleeping, reading, recreation, conversation, etc.

Mortification may likewise be considered as: (1), corporal, pertaining to things exterior, and material; and (2), spiritual, pertaining to the interior life. But nothing could be more futile than self-denial in outward things without the spur and strength of spiritual motives. Perhaps the violence done to proportion by excessive outward asceticism has occasioned the reaction to self-indulgence which impairs the force, nerve, and courage of many Christians, reducing them to a condition of moral impotence. To a discipleship which makes nothing of its obligation to take up the cross daily,

the cross of Christ will soon become foolishness. They only are wise who seek their crosses, nor will they have to go far to find them, little and large, within and without.

Mortification should also be considered as having its opportunities: (1), in the sovereign decrees of Providence, as the misfortunes, discomforts, and trials which come upon us; and (2), in deprivations and severities which have their rise in our own determinations, as when we punish ourselves for sins of omission or commission, which is what we ought to do secretly every day.

Exterior self-denial has its place and value, and ought to be more common than it is. It is possible to regulate the spiritual by the pains of the physical. But there is an enemy within which should be mortified by direct assault; it is that taint and disorder of the soul which is called self-love. Sin began when the love of God was supplanted by the love of self, and the beginning of holiness takes place when the lost motive begins to predominate once more. But the new life must build itself on the ruins of the old. The old must be slain, though it take long to do it, and it

will die if we daily assault it with the sword of mortification.

Hence it is of the greatest importance that those who would subdue this enemy shall take account with watchful eyes of their natural inclinations, their predominant faults, their likes and dislikes, their sensitive spots, their pleasures of sense, because they may be certain that they shall thus discover the hiding-place of the foe. But even then they must consider that he is as subtle as inveterate, and can transform himself into an angel of light. There is only one infallible test by which to uncover his whereabouts—give him a cross to carry!

XI.—SELF-MORTIFICATION—ITS REWARDS.

There is no abiding pleasure consequent upon self-indulgence. It is the nature of satiation to pall the appetite; but mortification is prolific of lasting joys.

It is, first of all, a great spiritual advantage (and to a spiritual priest it is greater than any other blessing) to walk with his Lord in the pathways of self-denial. It is by “the fellowship of

His sufferings" that he is made "conformable to His death." Moreover, in walking with Christ through the valleys of discipline, he is obeying the command of Christ, and in the same moment he supplies the sacred heart with sweetest consolation—a form of reparation most acceptable to Him whose disciples in the hour of His bitter doom—one betrayed Him with a kiss, one denied Him, and all fled from Him as He was dying.

Mortification brings with it also the advantage that nothing so tends to repress remaining corruption, and expel its vicious tendencies. The old Adam cannot endure the sign of the cross. On the other hand, it fosters faith and infuses courage; it is prolific of humility; it is the very best school in which to learn to pray; the songs it teaches the soul to sing in the midst of the fiery furnace may be more pleasing to Christ than the music the unfallen angels offer; it is the subjugation of the flesh to the spirit, and converts its enmity into a help to progress.

There is nothing more effective in preventing lapses or in restoring the soul to peace. He who feels the vise and grip of sin upon his will can

sever its grasp with one blow of the sword of discipline.

And he who has learned to die to the fleshy mind, and to treat all his low and evil inclinations as "corpses," has by this very lesson prepared himself for that form of dying of which man has but one experience—that hour when the body sinks to pallid death and the soul takes her flight to another world.

In order to get the blessings that flow from the art of dying to self, the holy priest has found immeasurable help in specific prayer for it; and surely the Crucified One must have peculiar regard for such petitions.

He has also trained himself to avow his adherence to the standard of the cross, choosing and choosing daily to be the partisan of the new, spiritual, and heavenly nature, rather than of the old nature that is earthly, selfish, animal; delighting in the law of God after the inward man, and appealing to the great Captain for deliverance from this body of death.

He practises self-contradiction in things lawful, for wholesome benefit not only, but because

thereby he makes it less difficult to deny himself in forbidden things. The same is true with respect to venial faults. To withstand them face to face prepares him for severer conflicts, and it is also true that though not intrinsically heinous they are perilous, it being a facile descent from little faults to the greatest.

In doubtful cases he will not reach hasty decision, but will always determine to give the new nature the benefit of the doubt and prefer what Jesus would have preferred. Also he will, in innocent gratifications, incline to the minimum, rather than incur the danger of intemperance, and he will use things agreeable with reference rather to necessary use than to the delights of the senses.

XII.—THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

The more closely a God-fearing priest devotes himself to the attainment of holiness, the more cheer and help does he get from "the communion of saints," not only as an attractive truth, but as a source of spiritual strength. It must needs be that the more surrendered and reverently near to

the Head he becomes, the more real and precious must be the mystic bond of unity which makes all christened men one in Christ, wherever they may be. It is a great inspiration to one who is engaged in a severe and long conflict—although the conflict may supply in itself a compensation of joy and peace—to feel a sense of fellowship with all who are fighting on the same battlefields; and still more sustaining is the thought that he is not only *not* a solitary pilgrim on the way to the city of God, but that he is compassed about with a cloud of witnesses, his forerunners in faith, who have reached the end of their pilgrimage, and watch his progress with prayer, love, and blessing.

The unifying principle is the common sacramental bond, productive of common participation in Christ's love and common exercise of love for Him. The limitations of the individual, in the order of nature, are analogous to those in the order of grace, and in each case association increases the possibilities of individual achievement.

The strength of this strength of fraternity lies

chiefly in the fellowship of all with Christ, who is the Head over all things to the Church, the fulness (*πλήρωμα*—the complete development) of Him that filleth all in all. From Him proceed all the blessings of the household of God. These are community blessings. Not in little individual cells do the faithful reside, but in a house of apostolic foundation, of which Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone, “in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Christ, “of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,” represents them in His continual intercession, pleading that they may “be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man,” that they may grow in the practice of the interior life, and that they may “know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,” and “be filled with all the fulness of God.”

The immeasurable attraction of the Son of God as He revealed Himself to them under the relation of a family head met an immediate response from the first Christians, for “all that

believed were together." Indeed, they were drawn into such intimate fellowship that even as to earthly possessions they had all things common. This phase of their associated life did not survive the test of experiment, but the spirit of unity which inspired them, even in their mistakes, was imperishable. It has had continual influence upon Christian people in their individual and collective capacities through all the ages, and it is asserting itself in the present age in the desire to lift the curse of separatism and bring in the time when they all shall be one. To hasten that day, individualism must desert its solitary pillar and come down to find its best life and hope in an unbroken Catholic fellowship. Men who deplore the loss of unity as an economic calamity, should consider that it is worse than that as an obstruction to spiritual light and growth, and that the individual who justifies separatism measurably reduces his possibilities of holiness.

To get help from "the communion of saints," the devout priest will consider that he has an indefeasible interest in the prayers, alms,

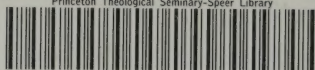
and fasts of the whole Church of God. He feels strong in their strength. He knows that in every private oratory he is remembered, and that at every altar the holy atonement is held up between him and his God. When sorrow burdens his heart or sickness his body, he casts himself on the sympathies of all his fellow sufferers, with assurance that through their faith Christ will bless him. In moments of irresolution or doubt, or when he is tempted to despair, he thinks of his brethren near the throne who overcame and gained the victory. In every experience and exigency, the sense of inclusion in the vast company of the saints in all worlds, ministers courage, resolution, and hope; and at the same time stimulates him to answer back the sweetness of their sympathy by prayers and labors, into which he puts the intention of their good. He prays for "the good estate of the Catholic Church." He beseeches God to have mercy upon all men. He remembers every deacon, every brother priest, every bishop, every member of Christ, and his heart melts with brotherly love as he swings the censer of prayer before the throne. As he stands

at the altar, what reverent multitudes of kindred spirits gather about him, and how tenderly does he bear upon his heart the eternal welfare of his brethren who have departed this life in the faith and fear of Christ; and what intense sympathy agitates his breast as he prays for his fellow-servants still here who "are in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity!"

But there is a wider scope of unity than this. For the universe of spirit is crowded with uncountable races or orders of angelic beings, who, if they have escaped the abuse of free will, are not so ignorant of the joys of redemption but that they can appreciate the glory of love which prompted the Incarnation, and can gladly "minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Sharing not either our shame or need, they make common cause with us in all our battles with hindrances and all our struggles for help; and how joyfully, too, they join with the whole Church of God, as, in the approach to the climax of the Eucharist, she sings, "Therefore, with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious

Name; evermore praising Thee and saying,
HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, Lord God of hosts,
Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory, Glory
be to Thee, O Lord Most High.”

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